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Drawn and Etched by A. Kornee.

MISS BESSY'S ELOPEMENT WITH BILBERRY.

ADVENTURES
OF
BILBERRY THURLAND.

His bus'ness was to pump and wheedle,
And men with their own keys unriddle;
To fetch and carry intelligence
Of whom, and what, and where, and whence;
And all discoveries disperse
Among the whole pack of conjurors.

HUDIBRAS.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

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RICHARD BENTLEY, NEW BURLINGTON STREET.

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THE LIFE OF BILBERRY THURLAND.

CHAPTER I.

THE STORY OF AR COCK, CONTINUED.

“LET ’s see,” said Sam Pogson, pointing his eyes at the bowl of his tobacco-pipe, “where did I leave off? Oh! about the squire. Well then, young chap, the next thing after that as happened to ar cock was this. One night, about three or four weeks after I wouldn’t sell him to th’ squire, i’ th’ dead o’ th’ night, when I were fast asleep — for you know I always sleep as sound as a roach — my missis there gives me a thump i’ th’ side, and says she, ‘ Sam, there’s summut amiss i’ th’ henroost.’ ”

“Nay, nay,” shouted the landlady across the bar, “you’re forgetting, them wasn’t my words; my words was this: ‘Sam,’ said I, for you know I always call him Sam for familiarity,—‘Sam,’ I says again, for he was very hard to waken,—‘*Sam!*’ says I, ‘I’m sure somebody’s robbing th’ henroost, for I hear ’em flustering about in a queer way.’”

But the interrupted husband would not listen to her corrections any longer. “Well, well,” he observed very sourly, “what different do you call that to what I said?—only you mun be having your tongue in somehow, that’s all. As I were saying, she gives me a punch, and says she, ‘There’s somebody robbing the henroost.’ ‘Then,’ says I, ‘I’ll bet ten pound they’re after that cock of arn.’ So I jumps out of bed in my shirt; and, wi’out stopping to put on either my breeches or shoes, I runs down stairs and takes th’ gun off o’ th’ mantel-piece, cocks it, unbolts that back-door there, and slips out behind th’ pump, and listens. Do you know, I hears noat. Thinks I, missis mun be mista’en; but as I am here I’ll stand a bit.

So I sets my eye on th' stable-door, over where th' roost is, and there I stood with my bare feet dabbling i' th' cold splash a good while. However, at last, I hears summut inside th' stable ; so I claps th' gun to my shoulder, to be ready in case it was a thief. I th' next minnit th' door opens, and out comes a chap wi' that cock of arn under his arm. I lets fly directly, but I didn't hit him. He flings ar cock down, and runs away like a divil wi' brimstone on his teal. I didn't try to catch him, becos I'd got no shoes on ; but I picks that cock of ars up, and goes into th' house for a lantern. When I'd got a light, I takes ar cock back to th' perch ; but in going through th' stable, what do you think I'd done ? Blame me, if I hadn't shot one of my own horses : ay, that I had, as sure as you sit there, hit him straight up th' teal, and he lay on th' straw, as dead as carri'n. It was th' worst thing I ever did in my life : it did make me swear above a sup. I stood looking at him I don't know how long, for I seemed as if I'd lost myself. ' Dom me,' says I, ' what a fewl I am ! ' My

missis gets up to th' window in her night-cap, as soon as iver she heard th' gun go off, and shouts to me as I stood i' th' stable. At last I hears her, and stares about me, as if I didn't know where I was. But when I looked agen at Neddy, bleeding i' th' teal as he were, and thought o' th' dead loss I'd got on him, I couldn't help crying; and I was so mad at th' same time, that I knocked my own head agen th' door-post three or four times."

At this curious instance of his host's sagacity, Mr. Bilberry Thurland would have laughed heartily, if he dared; but so serious was the landlord in his pathetic relation, that to have laughed, or even smiled at it, would have been worse than treason. Therefore, he was reduced to the necessity of biting the end of his tongue off, to keep his countenance firm, while the narrator continued his story.

"I didn't go to bed agen at first, for I might as well have tried to fly as go to sleep. 'Well, but,' says my missis, 'get into bed agen at ony rate.' 'No, no,' says I, 'I've shot my horse, and I ought to sit dithering here in my

shirt.' Says I to her, 'I shall niver take no more pleasure i' that cock of arn as long as I live.' 'Oh, yea,' says she, 'not so bad as that neither, Sam. You moant take it to heart that how.' She tried to soothe me up about it; and I can say this for her, she isn't, and never was, one of them that makes bad worse wi' a great row and blow-up after it. 'It can't be helped, Sam,' said she, 'so here 's no use i' grieving about it now. What 's done *is* done, as ivery body knows, and there 's no help for't; so you might as well laugh as cry, for one'll do just as much good as t'other;' and then she flung th' blanket open, and, do you know, somehow or other I persuaded myself to creep in till morning. Now, young man, you must underconstand I haven't no desire to make no reflections upon nobody; but for all that I must say, it does seem to me as if that gentleman that offered a guinea for ar cock — I mention no names, mark me — but it does appear to my mind as a queer sort of a circumference, that this felony, as Mr. Wild called it, on ar cock, should have been attempted so very

shortly after a person — I don't say who — had put down a guinea i' goud upon this here very table for him. Mind, I don't say noat agen ar squire; he has his qualities i' spite of ony body; but, for all that, ivery body knows as it says i' th' Bible, there's always good and bad mixed together; chaff along wi' th' wheat, as one may say. Ar squire has his wheat we all know, and there's them as talks agen him that says he has his chaff. To be sure *I* don't say so; but then you know he's mortal like you and me, or ony of us, and we know very well that *we* 've got ar chaff, and —— and —— what think you, Tom?"

Tom, thus appealed to on a sudden when he least expected it, started as if he felt an earthquake; and, scarcely knowing whether to believe his ears or not, asked "Eh, mester?"

"I say," replied the host, "what is your thoughts on this matter?"

"Well, mester," Thomas observed with cautious hesitation, "I'm sure I don't know. I hardly know what to think. Some folks—as I've heard you say mony a time—some folks

thinks one road, and some another; and that we're very sure *is* the case. However, I know it from myself, and that's enough for me. Only, as you obsarve on this here subject, I sartinly do think there is summut very odd about it. It seems a queer unaccountable sort of thing, to be sure, that ar squire should bid a guinea for this cock of yours, and go off with his teal tucked up about it, and then directly after that somebody should try to steal him. That sartinly is what I can't make out. However, there's this to be said, all these sort of mysteries 'll be cleared up at th' last day—that's a consolation: and let all them, squires or unsquires, as had ony finger in 'em, look to that."

"That's good, Tom my lad," said the land-lord, in approval of Thomas's observations. "There's summut in thee, after all, though old Greensmith did use to say thou wart a block-head. But if he were here this minnit, I'd give him a full quart to beat that, wise as he thinks his-self. I know he hasn't th' brains to do it wi'."—Which piece of commendation the land-

lord clenched by a deep drink, that all at once emptied his can. "Here, missis," he shouted, holding his pewter out, "let's have another drop to keep my whistle wet, just while I tell this young man th' end of ar cock, and then"—But he cut himself short in the middle, as though a second thought reminded him that what he was about to say next might as well be saved to a more convenient opportunity.

"Yes, sir," Bilberry remarked, "I should very much like to hear the end of this story. I mean to walk six more miles before dark, so that I cannot stop long; but I should like to hear the finishing."

"To be sure, sir," answered the landlord, who was now growing very polite. "How get you on?" and he cast a crooked eye over the edge of Mr. Thurland's can.

"Rarely, sir," said Bilberry, taking another drink to assure his host of the fact.

The landlord composed himself in his seat by way of preparation.

"Why then, sir,—young man, I mean,—for some weeks after this I could not bear the sight

of this cock of arn. He strutted about th' muck just as usual, for he knowed noat about it; but then, you know, in my eye it looked as if he were crowing over old Neddy, and th' thoughts of that was what I couldn't bear, for he was as good a bit of horseflesh as iver skin covered. But for all that, grief wears out, it's said; and that's true of my own experience. I took a dislike to that gun as I shot him with, so I sold it and got anōther; and that helped along with all th' rest to bring me round agen. Thank God, I didn't much miss the price o' th' horse, and all th' rest wore off by degrees. So in time, as my missis made me nice bits now and then to help me up th' hill agen, I comes to be just as good a man as I was before. Meantime, you must understand, this cock of arn kept coming forward like turnip-tops in spring. Practice makes perfect, they say, and so it was with him. He was cob of th' country round, and he'd got sich a reputation all about, that you'd be astonished what lots of chaps used to come to ar house of a Sunday to have a look at him. And sometimes they brought a bit of

a cock along with 'em, just to try how ar cock fought; and we let 'em have a shy out i' th' back-yard here; for you see, though I didn't myself like cocking on a Sunday, yet, for all that, a man has his living to get i' th' world, and it don't do to be more nice than wise, for sich chaps as them in a generality drinks a good sup of ale in an afternoon. But you know I took care to let 'em niver make no noise o'er it, or else we should very soon have got th' parson about us; and, to speak truth, I'd as leave see th' divil i' my house as Mr. Wild on sich a business as that; he'd be fit to twinge my head off.

“ Well, young man, week after week, and month after month, this cock of arn kept getting famouser and famouser, till raelly I felt sartin he must be a sort of what they call a progeny. In fact, as I seed it said i' th' paper last week but one, when it was speaking about summut almost as great as this consarn of ar cock, the eyes of all Hewrup was on him. And when I've said that, I can't say no more. However, as a proof on't, I can tell you there was a

chap comed all th' way down from th' big town—you know where I mean—on purpose to try if he couldn't buy him. But how iver he got to know as he was mine, puzzles my head more than th' Old Testament. I've thought on't mony a time, but I'm dom'd if I can make it out, wi'out it be as they've heard of *me* i' Lunnun. Howiver, it is sartin that a chap did come down to buy him if he could, and he stopped at ar house thick end of a week ; but, do you know, I wouldn't part wi' this cock of arn after all. And so how do you think that divil sarved me in revenge? I'll venture to say, you niver heard sich a thing in your life. Though, first of all, I should tell you that when he first comed into th' house, swaggering with his short green coat, and his hat stuck up iver so high, I seed he was a smart un from Lunnun, or some sich big place ; and so, as I had heard of sich like chaps as him afore, I takes my missis into th' back-yard for secrecy, and I says to her, ' Missis,' says I, ' I don't see what sich swelling nuts as him should be doing in little houses like arn, though ivery body knows their own business

best. But if he means stopping, we mun mind what we're about. I don't mean to say as we mun show it, mark me, for it's possible we may be mista'en. He *looks* like a good customer; but for all that, as there is sich things in th' world, he may on the other hand prove a bad un.' That's just what I said to her. 'Well, Sam,' says she agen, 'we're sure it's best to be safe; for here's no telling what folks is till one's tried 'em; only I shouldn't like to offend him if he *is* a gentleman,' says she: 'what can we do?' 'Well,' says I to her, 'I don't know; we mun let it be a bit, and see if we can pick onything out of him, for they say one can tell a gentleman by his talk; and as he'll be wanting dinner, I reckon, you can set Bessy on to observe what he says and does, and perhaps that 'll be summut to go by.' And at last, you know, we agreed to do so; but all this, mind, was afore we knowed onything at all of him, for I don't think he'd bin i' th' house ten minutes.

"Well, so we waited till dinner-time comed, for he wouldn't get his dinner wi' us, but ordered it at two o'clock in that big parlor there by his-

self. When Bessy had set th' things and sarved all up, she was just going to wash ar dishes, when th' parlor-bell rings as hard as it could. Bess dabs down th' dishcloth, wipes her hands on her apron, and runs in; and what think you it was he wanted? Why, a spewn for th' salt! When she said so, I turns round: 'Missis,' says I, 'that's enough; that proves to my satisfaction he's a gentleman, or else—particularly as there's nobody but his-self—he'd stuck his knife-point into't at once, as we do.' 'Ay,' says she, 'that he must be; as, for my part, I should niver have thought of sich a thing as a salt-spewn.'

"After dinner, besides ale, he drunk two eightpenny glasses of brandy-and-watter, cos he said he was used to it; and that convinced us he'd bin 'customed to good company.

"Besides, I went up into his room myself, and see'd his luggage, which was a nice portmantle with a brass plate and his name carved on it same as they do on gentleman's doors. *J. Cumberland, Pentonvilly*,—that was th' name. I remember it as well as if it was my own, and

so I'll be boun' does my missis if I were to ax her.

“In the afternoon he crep' about th' yard here, which made me clap my eye into th' corner o' th' window to inspect what he was after; when all on a sudden I catches him agen th' heap, staring at that cock of arn as hard as he could. I goes out and up to him respectfully, and I says, ‘You think that a fine bird, sir, no doubt?’ ‘No,’ says he, I don’t: he’s noat at all to what we have i’ th’ pits at Lunnun,—noat at all, landlord,’ says he. Upon that I opens my eyes a bit: says I, ‘You don’t know him, sir; you only see him in this dirt like a common cock.’ And then I axed him if he’d ony connexion with them Lunnun pits. ‘Connexion!’ says he; ‘it is them pits as is connected with me. I’m th’ biggest man of all at ony main that is fought within farty mile o’ Town. I niver bet less nor five hundred or a thousand; and sometimes six or eight thousand at a time, if th’ cocks is good.’ ‘What! pounds?’ says I. ‘Do you think I talk of silver?’ says he agen, snapping me up. ‘I

don't know small change,' said he; 'I niver keep it.' And on that he crammed his hand in his breeches-pocket and pulled out a handful of guineas; 'See you,' says he, 'this is the only coin I know.' And then he had sich a look at me, as made me snicker up into my skin like a worm. For all that, he made so free in conservation wi' all th' house, that on the very same night I said to him, 'May I make so bold, sir, as to ax what may be your business in these parts? Becos, if it's onything in my way, I'll help you all as lies in my power.' 'You're blunt, landlord,' says he, 'but that's what I like. My business is this; —I come here to buy cocks.' Upon that, you know, we comed very shortly to get talking agen about this cock of arn. 'He's a fine feathered bird,' said he, 'but feathers isn't pluck. We want summut else beside feathers.' 'Then,' said I, 'ar cock has summut else.' And, though I didn't mean to sell him, I told all th' battles he'd won just as I've bin telling you. But he said that was all chance, and that a good Lunnun cock would kill him in two

minnits and a quarter. Ay, he even cut th' time so fine as that. In short, he did all he could to run this cock of arn down; and wouldn't believe onything as I said in praise of him. It wasn't becos I meant to make a bargain with him, but I didn't like to hear ar cock set on his bottom in that way. As I'd bred him myself, I thought it was my duty to stick up for him.

“ Well, to shorten th' tale, do you know, this chap stopped at ar house nigh a week, eating and drinking like a lord; for you're sure, as he'd so much money, we let him want for noat. And ivery day he went up and down about th' country looking for cocks; but he always said he couldn't find ony that suited him.

“ At last, one morning he calls me into th' parlor. ‘ Landlord,’ says he, ‘ I haven't much 'pinion of that cock of yours—I've been looking at him agen,—but as you've said so much about him, I don't mind buying him for a trial.’ ‘ Well, sir,’ said I, ‘ I'm much obliged to you for th' offer, but I hardly know whether I want to sell him.’ ‘ Domme,’ says he, tossing

his head up and cramming his hands in his breeches-pockets, 'then what's all this talk for? what do you mean, landlord?' said he. 'Sir,' I said agen, I haven't no meaning whativer, only I should be very sorry to offend you about him.' 'Sorry?' says he, 'dom your sorrys, after sich as this! Here you talk about a cock as if you wanted to get shut of him; and then when it comes to, you hardly know whether you want to sell him or not.—Why, I'd wring his head off afore iver I'd treat ony gentleman i' that way.' That was just what he said. I see'd he was in a passion, and I knowed he hadn't paid a farthing of his shot, so I tries to cool him down a little. 'Hear reason,' said I, 'sir; hear reason at ony rate.' 'Dom your reason,' said he agen, 'there is no reason for sich as this. If you want to sell th' cock, say so, and done with it: and if you don't, what in the divil did you ever talk about him for?' 'Well, sir,' said I, 'and if I did want to sell him, what vallyation did you think of putting on him, sir?' For, young man, you see I thought of taming him

down by them means, though all the while I no more meant to sell that cock of arn,—no, no more than I meant to sell him my own missis.

“ ‘ Ay, landlord,’ then said he, ‘ now you are talking summut like reason ; that’s coming a little nearer the mark. I don’t want to take him from you if you wish particularly to keep him ; but at the same time I don’t mind buying him as you have praised him so much, though, I tell you agen, I haven’t myself any great ’pinion of his worth. Nevertheless, landlord, I’m willing to risk a little money on the chance of what he may turn out ; and as you seem to be a poor needy man, I’ll make you a liberal offer, and give you five shillings for him.’ At that I stares like a stuck pig. ‘ Why, sir,’ says I, ‘ what is that ? Squire Elksland, upon th’ hill here, laid me down a guinea i’ goud for him, and I let him take it up agen.’ ‘ Did he ?’ says he, staring at me ; ‘ then, landlord,’ says he, ‘ let me tell you th’ squire was a big fewl, and you are a bigger.’ And with that, young man,—could you believe it ?—but with that he put on his hat, and said he would

take a bit of a walk up th' village,—went straight out of that very front-door there as we comed in at, whistling a tune, and he niver comed back agen from that day to this !”

“ Sad domd rascal, that,” observed Mr. Thomas, the cock-portrait painter, when the host had closed his sentence : “ I see'd him myself once or twice when he was here, and I mun say I thought him a niceish sort of a chap i' th' looks ; but we munna judge sheep by th' wool. Directly after he'd started, I told mester that I niver liked them flashy fellows as drinks brandy and watter when other folks drinks ale ; cos I know that sort of stuff takes some paying for, and it's a deuced deal easier to drink it than to pay for't.”

“ Ay,” observed the landlord seriously, “ that I've larnt to my cost. If he had known how to pey as well as he knowed how to eat and drink, we should have bin all the better for his company. But, as they say when onything's matter,—experience teaches wisdom. And so it does, only it sometimes costs more than it's worth. I shall be wise enough next time to

make all sich chaps as him pey as they go on, if ony of 'em iver comes into my house agen."

Bilberry here inquired of his host whether that swindler took his luggage along with him when he went? "Because," remarked this sagacious young man, "I should think there might have been enough in it to balance the shot you had against him."—"Ay, bless you," the host exclaimed, "no, not he. He took noat, or else we should have bin up to him. It was there he did us; for who could have thought a man would go and leave his port-mantle behind him?"

"And, more than all th' rest, do you know, the villand actually ordered his dinner afore he went, and told 'em to get it ready by four o'clock, becos he said he was going a good way off, and shouldn't get back sooner. And I don't doubt that was done to get more time to clear his-self away afore we should begin to inspect him. The road we first fun it out, was this. My missis had roasted him a nice young duck, to be ready just as th' church struck four,—for she's a rare woman in a house, and cooks her meat to five minnits.

“ Well, she'd took it down and got all ready exactly as the clock struck. Bessy had set th' table before, and ivery thing was at their finger-ends. We waited and waited till quarter to five, but he didn't come. My missis—as was very natteral—was all over a stew about it. For you see this duck that she'd roasted so nicely at first, was baking afore th' fire to keep it warm, till there was hardly a bit of goodness left in it. Pouring gravy over it was of no use. for it all dried up directly. At last she sits her down on the far side o' th' kitchen, as hot as a devel with tenting th' duck. ‘ Raelly,’ says she to me, ‘ raelly, Sam, if he don't come soon, I think I shall be fit to knock my head off.’ And then she whisked her apron afore her face, she was all in sich a melt and a swelter. ‘ Well,’ said I to her, ‘ it is of no use being put out of your way about it. remember what you said to me about th' horse.’ ‘ Ay, ay,’ says she agen, ‘ it's easier for folks as isn't consarned to talk of them things than for them as is to do 'em.’ ‘ What,’ said I, ‘ you find it out now, do you?—But you didn't

think so when you soothed me up about th' horse.'

" I see'd she didn't like what I said, so I puts it off, and I toud her to put th' things i' th' pantry, and if he comed to his dinner after that, he might have it lukewarm, and thank his-self for sauce to't. Wi' that, she gets up in a passion, and shouts to Bessy to clear th' table, and if he comed then he might eat his dinner off o' th' floor for what she cared. Them was her words. But you know he niver did come, as I mentioned afore.

" Well, at night, when it had got quite dark, we made sartin he had either gone clean off, or else got stopping somewhere till morning. Though, as folks always judge for th' worst, we weren't without ar suspicions that he'd swindled us.

" While I were getting my supper,—as I always have a bason of milk-porridge with sops in it, and a sup of ale for a nightcap,—I says to missis—thinking of this villand, as I couldn't get him out of my head, says I, ' I'll tell you what, missis, I think we are always getting into

some trouble or another,—I never heard tell of ony body like us.’ ‘No,’ said she, and she raelly couldn’t help crying then, which made me very sorry to see her,—‘no,’ said she; ‘there sartinly niver was nobody that stood less in luck’s way than we do. Here’s always summut happening as shouldn’t. I think there is noat as goes right. I’m sure I sha’n’t get a bit of sleep of all this night wi’ thinking on it.’

“And then she sobbed like a child. I didn’t try to talk to her, for I know’d that were of no use; but I goes to th’ cupboard and mixes her a glass of warm gin and watter. ‘Here,’ says I, ‘take and drink that, and then see how you are.’ She let it stand a bit, as all women does, for modesty, though there was nobody there but me. But when I toud her it was getting cold, she poured it in, and that brought her sperits round. After awhile, she wipes her eyes, though they’d got dry afore, and says she, ‘What does he owe us, think you, Sam?’ ‘What, that villand?’ says I: ‘I’m sure I don’t know.’ But I gets up to

look, for we'd set it all on i' th' chimby-corner. And do you know, young man, as true as God's in heaven, we had a score agen him that reached from th' ceiling straight down to the wash-board. There wasn't room to cast it up, and I had to get on to th' stool to read th' first items,—and sich lots on't was for brandy and watter and rum and milk that he'd had in a morning! It comed altogether to four and thirty shilling; though I had previously made up my mind to call it two pound, as he knowed noat about change. Howiver, as you see, my hopes and meanings was all blasted, as mony folkse has bin afore me, and mony will be agen. For I said to my missis, 'We've this conflagration, that scores and scores of people have bin sarved the same, and ten times worse, if we knowed all; so we aren't so bad as them, at ony rate.' 'No,' says she, 'after feeding him wi' th' best the house could afford, and then to be sarved this way,—it's bad enough to be sure; but then, noat's so bad but it might be worse.' This, you mind, we said to one another a day or two after, when we were quite sartin

he'd clean gone. Upon that, when no doubt about it was in ar minds, I was at a loss what to do with his portmantle, for he'd left it up stairs as usual. So me and my missis we debilitates about it, and i' th' end we agreed that I should go to ar parson, Mr. Wild,—for he's the justice i' these parts,—and ax him what to do about it ; becos, after all, I didn't like to open no man's portmantle wi'out authority. So away I goes, though my missis says, 'Wash your face afore you go, Sam, and put a clean hankitcher round your neck, or else he'll think you haven't no respect for him.' I does so, and goes."

CHAPTER II.

A STRANGE MISTAKE OF POGSON'S, SHOWING HOW INGENUOUSLY A MAN MAY ROB HIMSELF.—THE CONCLUSION OF AR COCK.

“ WHEN I got to Mr. Wild's, th' sarvent bid me go into th' library till he could come to me ; for at th' time, as it happened to be just after breakfast, he was bizzy shaving his-self. When I got in, she shut th' door on me ; but I durstn't sit down, the chairs all of 'em were so clean and bright. So what does I do but takes off my hat, and peeps round at th' books for pas-time as one may say. Lord, what books he has ! Why, Tom, they covered th' walls all round, and sich goud on th' backs of 'em. If they were mine I durstn't touch 'em. ‘ My soul and body,’ says I to myself, when I looked

round, ‘ what a head he has if he can do with all these !’

“ Well, I conspected ivery shelf till I got tired, and Mr. Wild didn’t come ; so I hardly knowed what to do wi’ myself. I wanted to sit down, only in my own mind I thought them horse-hair bottoms was made for better seats than mine, and so I couldn’t make bold to sit on ’em. I stood up, thinking how he’d be here in a bit, but he didn’t come till I was fairly tired out. So, as I might not give offence by dirtying th’ chairs with my breeches, at last I sits down on th’ floor. I don’t think I’d bin down two minnits afore th’ parson comes in all at once wi’out ony ceremony, and just catches me before I’d time to get up agen. When I see’d him, I felt—ay, nobody knows how I felt ! My face burnt like fire, and for a minnit or two I actually couldn’t see. He were just going to say good morning to me ; but when he see’d where I was, on th’ floor, he stopped it, and instead, says he, ‘ Ay, Mr. Pogson, what’s amiss ?’ I scrambled up as fast as iver I could, and while I was brushing th’ dust off my knees and

breeches-seat with my hand, I explained to him all about it. He laughed—for he's a good-natur'd feller i' some things—and says he, 'I'm very sorry, Mr. Pogson, I wasn't here to ax you to a chair, but why didn't you take one yourself? Do sit down, sir,' said he,—he called me sir,—'do sit down, sir, and I'm quite at your sarvis.'

"Wi' that I feels encouraged, and I puts one of my thighs upon th' corner o' th' chair, just for sake of decency in obeying his wishes; and then I told him all my business, how this rascad had sarved me; and at last I axed him very respectfully for his advice about th' port-mantle. 'Oh, Mr. Pogson,' says he, 'in sich a case as this I wouldn't hizzitate a moment to open it, after you're clear he went off clandestinely. Though,' says he agen, 'I'm sorry you didn't inform me sooner; for then we might have sent after him, and perhaps catched him for an example to justice.' 'Ay, sir,' said I, 'I am much to blame there, sir.' 'No, no, Mr. Pogson,' said he, 'it's no blame, only an oversight, becos you didn't know how to go on

with sich scoundrels. He 's a reg'lar swindler, no doubt,' said Mr. Wild, 'and it's ten to one but he'll go and try to sarve somebody else out i' th' same way. But,' says he, 'it is as it is now, and we mun make the best on't. I recommend you to open his luggage, and if there's as much in it as 'll pay your charges, all well and good ; sell it and pay yourself. And if there's onything left out, it mun go to th' king. At least,' says he, 'you may bring it to me, and I'll take care it shall be right.'

“When I got back, my missis met me at th' door, for she'd bin on th' look-out for me a good while. And as soon as she could hear me, I shouted to her that we'd got a warrand to open th' portmantle.

“She turns round directly ; tells Bessy to bring th' hammer after her, and runs up stairs. I myself makes haste behind her, for fear she shouldn't do it right ; and I caught her at that villand's chamber-door. Both of us immediately seized hold on't, and my missis undid th' straps. ‘Stop,’ says I ; ‘afore we go ony deeper, we'd better have a witness to't, for

we've made one mistake i' th' law already, and let's have no more if we can help it. So we calls up Tom,—this man here, as he happened to be i' th' house,—to look on while me and missis opened it.—Didn't we, Tom?"

The gentleman thus appealed to replied, "That you did, I'll take my oath afore anybody." And he was about to detail some further particulars when the landlord interrupted him.

"Ay, that's enough, Tom,—I only axed you that queshton. We called him up, you hear, young man, and then set about breaking th' portmantle open.

"It wasn't without its weight, I assure you; so when I took it up, I says to my missis, 'If it be as heavy as this with guineas, like them he showed me down i' th' yard yonder, and they are all good uns, we'll charge them eightpenny brandies a shilling a-piece, and all t'other things at th' same rate; and then th' parson may take th' rest and welcome.' '*If* they are,' says she, 'but we've no hopes of sich luck as that; guineas isn't like gravel-stones, and it's a deal more likely they're one than t'other.'



Drawn and Etched by A. Harvey.

A TRAVELLER'S TRUNK.

“ ‘That may be,’ I obsarved agen, ‘but here’s noat beats a trial.’ And wi’ that I crams th’ chisel between th’ lid and lock, and by down-right main strength I breaks th’ lock and gets it open.

“ I wish you’d bin there when we took th’ lid off. It was a pictur to see us, ’specially when we see’d what was inside. Tom, here,—you remember it well enough, Tom, I know,—Tom lifts up his hands like a crowsfoot. Bessy peeped over his shoulder, as if she was going to give him a kiss; and my missis stood wi’ both her fists stuck atop of her hips, and her elbows out in vandykes. I undid th’ straw that lay on th’ portmantle, and there we spied under it a lot of th’ best plated cans, sich as we use only for th’ wakes and good company, packed up so as not to jingle agen one another with carrying. ‘Lord!’ obsarves I, taking one out, ‘these ’ll pey us, missis, if there’s plenty of ’em.’ She snatches it out of my hand, and I picks up another; for, do you know, when we counted ’em, there was just half-a-dozen; and though we rummaged the portmantle through and through,

them was all that was in it. ‘Why, Sam,’ says my missis, when she’d look’d at it, ‘these is worth seven or eight shilling a-piece at least, for they’re almost the same pattern as ar best cans, and they cost six shilling a-piece.’ ‘At that rate, then,’ says I, ‘there’s enough of’em to pey th’ shot, I should think.’ And I directly kest up on th’ wall what it comed to. ‘Is there?’ says she. ‘I arn’t sure yet,’ says I, ‘for I haven’t reckoned it.’ In about half an hour I makes it out to a sartinty. ‘At seven shilling a-piece,’ I obsarved, ‘they exactly come to two guineas; and that ’ll just satisfy us without leaving onything for th’ king.’ ‘That’s right,’ said my missis, ‘we’re poor folks, and he’s a man as wants for noat.’ After we had took ’em all down stairs, ‘Sam,’ says she, ‘I wouldn’t wait for nobody, for fear that rascad should come back afore we’ve gotten shut of ’em. So do you put on your other britches, and run down with ’em to Wetherton,—that’s ar market-town,—and sell ’em for what you can get; cos when we’ve once got th’ money we shall be safe, and not till then, as it’s hard to

get butter out of a dog's throat,' says she. That seemed to me very reasonable; so I takes her advice, and goes off as fast as I could, without saying onything to onybody. I niver called on Mr. Wild, becos I thought he would perhaps think these cans was stole, and so would hinder me selling 'em, which wouldn't have suited my notions of what's right; for, as he had robbed me, surely I had a right to rob somebody else, even if it was so.

"When I got to Wetherton, I goes straight to Turner's the broker, and I offered 'em to th' old man, for he happened to be in th' shop. 'What,' says he, 'Mr. Pogson, you keep a public-house and want to sell your cans?' 'Ay,' says I, 'them half-dozen is more than we've a use for, and so I might as well get shut of 'em.' For you see, young man, I didn't want to tell th' truth of my business to all th' town; and I knowed if I only toud it to old Turner it would spread like wildfire. 'What do you want for 'em?' he asked me. 'Why,' said I, 'they're worth seven shilling a-piece.' 'Seven shilling!' says he; 'then I arn't your custom-

er, Mr. Pogson ; I couldn't sell 'em agen for more than three and sixpence at most, and I mun have a profit out of that, or else it's no use keeping shop.' 'Three and sixpence !' says I agen, 'why, Mr. Turner, I'm abased at you. I warrand you I've got another half-dozen at home, not sich a good pattern as these, that cost me six shilling ivery farthing.' 'Bran new and second-hand makes all the difference,' said he ; 'but it's no use arguing ; I hate dodging ; and so at once I'll give you three shilling a-piece, and take th' chance of 'em.' I kicks at that a good while, but it meant noat ; he wouldn't squeeze another halfpenny out ; so, thinking that was better than none, at last I agrees to take it, and then goes home. When I described how I'd gone on, my missis didn't half like it, as she had bin looking for a couple of guineas or so. But I told her if she had gone herself, she couldn't have done better ; and so we pocketed th' eighteen shilling, and kept th' portmantle.

“ Howiver, this wasn't quite the end of that

job ; for, about a three week after, we had a meeting of farmers at ar house, summut consarning corn ; and when my missis went to th' corner cupboard in that parlor there, to get 'em better things to drink out of, she comes running back to me in a fright. 'Sam,' says she, 'if all them six best cans isn't clean gone !' 'Bless my soul !' says I, and, as she told me after, I turned as white as a witch. I couldn't believe her, so I went to look th' shelves over with my own eyes ; but sure enough they were gone. 'Well,' I obsarved, 'I see now how it is ; that rascad is a bigger villand than iver. I see now what he wanted to live in that parlor for, with his-self :—dom him, he's picked th' lock and took 'em out, and now I've gone and sold 'em agen for three shilling a-piece less than I gived for 'em a year since ;' and, to mend th' matter, when I went down next day to Wether-ton, and told old Turner all about it, that great scoundrel wouldn't sell 'em me back agen for less than twenty-four shilling ; and twenty-four shilling was what I gave him for 'em ;—ay,

that it was, neither more nor less. Did you ever in your life, young man, hear of any body so unlucky?"

And hereupon the unfortunate host took another drink of his own brewing, to keep his spirits up; while Mr. Bilberry Thurland, with a most praiseworthy and Christian spirit, scarcely to be anticipated in one of his breeding, and only to be accounted for from that naturally excellent disposition which his education could not destroy, entered very feelingly into a speech of condolence upon his host's misfortunes; but which we must decline giving at length, because the pathetic is totally foreign to our purposes. It is enough here to observe, that it met with the entire approbation of his audience, which is saying for it much more than can be said of speeches that lay claim to far greater eloquence of language and importance of subject. Nay, insomuch was the landlord himself delighted with the sympathy of his guest, that, in the sudden warmth of his heart and the muddled impetuosity of his brain, he immediately filled Bilberry twopennyworth of gin, for which he

most resolutely refused to receive pay, only hinting that he wished his own health to be drunk in it.

With this noble invitation of Samuel Pogson's, Mr. Thurland was wise enough—as in all other the like cases—to comply. Accordingly he flung his head back, and, opening his mouth like a kitchen sinkhole, tossed off the liquor to the better luck of his landlord.

When this spirit—which by the way Bilberry found to contain some few flavouring drops of turpentine—had effectually drained into his stomach, it is not to be wondered at that, aided by the ale he had already imbibed, he should grow somewhat more inquisitive and curious than when he entered the pothouse, as well as much improved in the gift of speech. He himself began to discourse very fluently upon some of his own adventures, and amongst the rest he was about to detail to the landlord that remarkable story of Grimsby's waistcoat, which we have before had occasion to relate, when he suddenly bethought that his host had not quite finished the history of the marvellous

cock, Buonaparte. He therefore, in pure good manners, stopped his own conversation, and besought that miserable man to conclude his story. For when Mr. Bilberry reflected a moment upon the whole circumstances, he could not for his life imagine how it had come about, that a bird, which by one means or another had brought upon his owner such a complication of disasters, should finally have been so highly esteemed as to obtain the distinguished honour of a full-length portrait; and, more than all, should actually have subverted the ancient reign of the Black Bull, and raised himself to the throne instead.

In no degree backward to satisfy Mr. Thurland's wishes, the landlord put another charge of tobacco into his pipe, and, forgetting to light it, began to smoke away as he thus continued his narrative.

“ You see then, young chap, after that, I didn't take no more interest in this cock of arn. I thought that job o' th' horse bad enough at th' time, but this other substracted to it did me completely up; and for one while I took

it so close to heart, that I did noat hardly but sit in that very same corner as you're in now, and smoke my pipe and drink a sup of ale. My missis thought she should niver have got me out agen, it lay so heavy upon my mind. And I raelly believe I niver should have stirred no more, if it hadn't so happened that Nat Mills comed into ar house one day after dinner, and called for a cup of ale.

“When he had sat a bit, I see'd he had summut a-brewing, but I takes no notice of him, for I always think the more one wants to know of folks's consarns, the harder it is to get onything out of 'em.

“I seemed as if I obsarved noat, so in a bit he begins to break th' ice. ‘Pogson,’ says he, ‘I think we shall beat you now, for we've gotten a cock that niver was licked in this world, though he has fought mony a battle.’ ‘Have you?’ says I to him, ‘where did you get him?’ ‘As to that,’ says he, ‘I munna tell.’ ‘Oh,’ says I, ‘I don't want to know if it's a secret; but, get him from where you would, I'll back ar cock agen him.’ ‘Will you?’

says he ; ‘ done then, and there’s a match made.’ We had some more talk about it, though we didn’t settle finally how it was to be exactly. And after that Nat went away.

“ I don’t know how it was, but all at once I feels my sperits get up agen ; and the same day, when we were getting ar tea, I says to my missis, ‘ Raelly, Kitty, I feel like another man upon this consarn.’ ‘ That’s well,’ says she, ‘ I’m glad to hear it, Sam, for you’ve bin as dull as a proker lately.’ Well, at night there’s six or eight of ’em comes to ar house to settle how th’ match were to be. Some were willing to back ar cock, and some Nat’s. And at last we agreed it should be for ten pound a side, on purpose to make ivery body try their best ; and that th’ match should come off in a month from that night, to give time for feeding and training th’ cocks a bit in ar rough way.

“ After that I devotes myself to th’ feeding of ar cock ; for thinks I, I’ve lost enough by this cock of arn already, and it not do to lose this great stake in at th’ bargain. So I sets about

and picks up all th' useful inflammation I could as to how he would be best treated. I borrows a book of George Kelly, that he had bought at half-price for threepence, of one of these chaps that comes round with numbers, where was a receipt for training cocks. Well, we looked into it,—me and my missis, for she begun to take some interest in't at last; but we bothered ar heads with it a good while, and couldn't make noat out on't i' th' end.—It only made us worse than we were afore. I don't know how it is, but I niver could larn onything out of books. They do me more harm than good; for I larn a deal best by hearsay, and my own experience. I do know what folks says, but I'm dom'd if I can understand that rigmarole stuff as one sees in print. But I reckon my head isn't like ivery body's, though it is as good as a mony I dar' to say, and better to me than ony body else's.

“Well, we managed this cock of arn according to the best of ar abilities. We clipped his teal down to th' stumps, and trimmed him round th' neck and at the end o' th' wings, till

he looked like a reg'lar pit cock. When I took him home agen—for it was ar tealor that cut him—my missis hardly knowed him agen. You'd have laughed if you'd seen him when we first turned him down into th' yard, after it. He seemed to feel that summut was gone from behind him, but didn't know what, for he couldn't see we had cut his teal off: and some o' th' hens was so frightened at him, they wouldn't let him go a-courting to 'em as he used to do afore.

“In time the day o' th' battle comes on; and we were as bizzy as flies in a dust-hole all morning. The battle was to be in ar yard, as there is plenty of room; and Nat Mills and George Kelly stakes a ring out, and puts plenty of flakes round to keep th' cocks in. We drewed carts and waggons round for folks to stand in, and charged 'em twopence a-piece to come inside th' gate, or else we should have bin over-run with all sorts of scamps and scrubs gethered from all th' country round.

“My missis,—as is always thinking for th' best,—borrows two more extraordinary wenches

into the house, to fetch up and sarve ale that day, for sich a company as we looked for isn't waited on by one pair of hands, nor two neither. I gets all the chairs down stairs, just as I do at th' wakes; and fetches as much ale up afore th' time comed, as filled ivery can and copper we had. You may think it would get rather flat that way, but sich chaps as them pours it in without tasting on't; at least, after th' first sup. I give 'em a drop of fresh at first, just to make 'em like it; and then sarves 'em out after with all th' dead, for when they've got warm in talk, they niver perceive it. Some few of 'em crep in about eleven o'clock i' th' morning, and sat i' th' house here, drinking and smoking, and talking about noat but th' cocks, till two o'clock, when the battle was to come off. But afore that time we had a house brim-full. At last Nat Mills comes, bringing their cock; and sich a swat of chaps comed along with him, cramming and pushing to get a look at him, till I was afraid they'd poke their elbows through th' windows, so I put th' shutter up a bit. When they had had some ale,

and were going through into th' yard, I puts th' door to, and claps my back agen it. 'Gentlemen,' says I, 'we've agreed to charge twopence a-piece for them that goes into th' yard, to keep you genteel; and I hope none of you'll object to pay that trifle.' Upon that, iver so many of 'em said it was a dom'd imposition; and as they'd had ale in th' house, and meant to have a good sup more afore they had done, they would see me at Old Nick's afore they'd pay it. 'Well, gentlemen,' says I, 'there's no occasion for none of that.—Let's be civil wi' one another if we can, at all events; but I do think you ought to give way to th' arrangements that's bin made.'—And I think so now. But when I said that, old Skinner the blacksmith shouts through th' uproar, and says he, 'Pogson,—Pogson,' says he; 'just gie me a hearing. You took divilish good care not to make arrangements for *peying us* twopence a-piece for drinking this dead swipes of yours.' And with that I gets laughed at by ivery body, till I flies into a bit of a passion. So I rams th' bolt into th' door, and says I,

‘I’ll tell you what, old Skinner,—I didn’t ax you to drink it without you liked; so, if you can please yourself better onywhere else, go, and good shutness to bad rubbage. Go, and be dom’d to you,’ says I; ‘I don’t want to see you in my house no more.’ Well, and do you know, upon that they laughed worse and worse. This makes me madder and madder; so I begins to pull my coart off to have a rap or two at him. My missis sees me, and she comes up all in a fluster: ‘Sam,’ says she, ‘what are you doing? what *are* you doing?’ says she; ‘don’t be in a passion, for he isn’t worth being mad about.’ And she laid hold of both my arms and pulls my coart on agen. ‘Missis,’ says I, ‘let me alone. I’m in my own house, and I’ll be mester on’t, or else it’s about time to drop it. “I not be domineered over by no man; and if he can’t come and drink sich ale as I have got to gie him, and be quiet o’er it, let him keep out o’ th’ house altogether. I don’t want him to come. I don’t want to see his face. I can sell my ale, thank God, to better men than him, and to them that peys as they go on,’ says

I ; ‘and that is more than he does, or ever did in his life, a sneaking idle divil.’ And all that, you mind, I shouted out so that he couldn’t miss but hear me.

“ Howiver, while I was saying it, I finds the company had almost all mizzled off, and old Skinner amongst ’em. So whether he heard what I said about him, I raelly don’t know, but I should think he did.

“ And what do you think they’d done ? Why, when I bolted the door, they all goes out th’ front road, slips round th’ house corner, and gets over th’ yard wall ; so, when I turns round, there they all stood agen th’ ring, laughing at me through the window.

“ I felt mad, and yet I couldn’t help laughing myself. So I says to my missis, ‘ Gie me a sup of gin and watter, or else I shall niver face ’em ; and then I’ll fetch ar cock out, and we’ll have done with it, for I want to see th’ end on’t,’ says I. She mixes me a good stiff glass, for she’s a rare wench at that ; I drinks it directly, and fetches this cock of arn out o’ th’ pen.

“ I didn’t want to get into no more noises myself, so I turns him over to George Kelly, and says I, ‘ Here, George, you can manage him quite as well as I can, and perhaps better. I don’t want to have ony more to do wi’ it.’ He takes him into th’ ring, and I myself climbs up into a front place in one o’ th’ waggons, though I had to knock three or four impudent young shavers over afore I could get up into it, though at the same time ivery inch on’t was my own. We had agreed before not to let ’em have steel spurs on, ‘ becos,’ said I, ‘ that isn’t a fair thing to go by.’ ‘ Let us have it all natur’,’ says I : ‘ natur’ is the thing as we mun decide from,’ and that none of ’em could get o’er ; so on that point I had it all my own way.

“ Well, when ivery thing was ready, they turns th’ cocks down to one another ; ay, that minnit ! It seemed to me as if me and my missis, and that cock of arn, hung upon one thrid. I didn’t know what to do with myself. I fixes my eyes on ’em like bullets, and that was all I could do. They raises their feathers, and puts their heads down, and there they stand,

staring at one another as if they were peter-ified. At last ar cock strikes, hits their cock on th' head; this cock of theirs flies up and tumbles his-self straight on to this cock of arn; ar cock goes at their cock agen, and knocks that cock of their's clean down. Their cock gets up and flies at ar cock with sich a fury, he knocks this cock of arn bang agen one o' th' flakes. Then there's sich a shout from them as bet upon that cock of their's; it rung i' my ears till I hardly knowed if I stood on my head or my feet. My heart leaps and flings like an old cow afore a storm; and I shouts to my missis to give me another sup of gin and watter. But though I shouted as hard as I could three or four times, she didn't hear me; so you may conjuncture what a belder there was among 'em. Howiver, ar cock, he holds his beak open a bit, and then goes at that cock of their's agen. And so they tussled together as well as they could, sometime one getting mester and sometime t'other; but upon th' average, I thought ar cock was getting th' worst on't. So I begins to feel down i' th' mouth, as I well might, considering what a stake

I might lose. For all that, though this cock of arn did seem to be going sadly th' wrong way for awhile, there was them round th' ring that swore like troopers he would beat i' th' end, 'for he was th' best-bottomed cock,' said they, 'o' th' two.' Howiver, I needn't tell you how they went on all through, for a cock-fight isn't like a battle with men,—when you've told one round of this, you've told all. I'll only obsarve, just to make short of up, that what they said about this cock of arn proved true i' th' end. He had most strength, and by that he wore their cock completely out. For, do you know, they fought till neither of them could hardly stand on their legs; and, at last of all, that cock of their's couldn't lift his head up to peck, but he just stirred it on th' ground and tried to peck th' dust. His eyes were swelled quite up, and his head was as bloody as a sheep's on a butcher's stall.

“ He lay on th' ground as if he were dead, but Nat Mills wouldn't give in even then; and he actually let that cock of arn peck him as he lay on th' floor, till he tumbled down his-self

a-top of him. Well, he were as stupid as a jackass about it yet, and wouldn't let his cock be took away till ivery body said it was a shame to let him lie. Upon that he snatches him up by one o' th' legs, and in revenge breaks both his wings o'er his back while he was alive, and then twists his neck round,—ay, he did, as true as I'm speaking. Dom me, if I could bear to see that, after th' poor thing had done all as it had ; so I jumps down from th' waggon wi'out thinking onything about the ten pound that cock of arn had 'won, and I jostles my road through th' crowd up to him. I doubles my fist in his face, for o' somehow I felt as if I couldn't help it, and says I, 'Nat,' says I, 'dom yo,—dom yo,' says I, and I couldn't get no farder.

“ He seemed to be ready for me, and as if he should like to have a rap at me, for he was as mad as a bull becos he'd lost th' ten pound ; so he makes no more to do, but takes and dabs th' cock's head 'raight into my face. That, you're very sartin, I couldn't put up with ; so I rips off my coart directly, flings it anywhere out of my

hand, and, as it so happened, very unlucky, though I didn't perceive it at th' time,—I chucked it into th' dusthole; well, howiver, I flings it out of my hand, pulls up my shirt-sleeves, and goes at him. He flings th' cock away, clean over th' rig o' th' house, and then begins to square at me. He was as blind as a beetle with his rage, so he comes drive up without caring for onything. I watches my opportunity, and afore he could reach me, just lets him drop with his nose upo' my left fist. That flattens it like a broad bean, and makes him sneeze, I assure you. I follows it up with a right-hander into its teeth, and I wholloped him rarely till he fell on to th' floor; and then I fell a-top of him, just for sake of squeezing th' bit of wind out as he had left in him. This, you see, makes them that sided with Nat ten times worse than before, and while I were on my hands and knees, one of 'em comes up in a cowardly way, and fetches me sich a kick *here*," and, to explain and illustrate his position, the landlord applied his hand to that part which usually is most liable to be appealed to after

the fashion he was describing,—“ fetches me sich a kick, it sent me bang on to th’ floor, head first. Them on ar side as stood by and see’d it done, immediately begun on him, three or four at once, for interfering : his side seeing four or five of arn threshing one of theirs, let fly at them directly, and so we comed to have a general battle. I laid about me as hard as iver I could, for I thought I should niver get another chance like that ; and, among th’ rest, I made two or three pretty good whops at old Skinner, for you know I picked him out on purpose. In two minutes,—or, I might say, in less than no time,—eight or ten of ’em were all down on th’ ground a-top of one another, kicking and thumping onybody that was next to ’em, without seeing whether they leathered friends or enemies.

“ Nat Mills had crep’ out of my road when th’ confusion begun ; but while they were all on a heap, he happened to come just agen old Skinner, and them two, though they were both on one side, laid into one another i’ grand style :

it did me good to see 'em. But while all this was going on, you munna think my missis was lying idle,—no, not she. As soon as iver I pulled my coart off, somebody runs into th' house to tell her I was going to lick th' blacksmith. She was just bringing a copper of ale up out o' th' cellar, but thinking noat about what she'd got in her hands, she flings that back agen down th' steps, and runs into th' yard. 'He sha'n't do noat o' th' sort!' says she; 'and I wonder you men isn't ashamed of yourselves, ivery one of you, you idle blaggards.'

"And then she strove hard to get through th' crowd to lay hold on me, but th' men wouldn't let her. They told her I should soon baste him, and be sure to do it; and then they squeezed close together, so that she couldn't get through. That puts her into a great passion: so what does she do to revenge herself, but runs into th' house, up stairs, opens th' chamber-window, crams herself half out, with two pots o' dirty watter in her hands, and

empties 'em both on to them eight or nine men that was struggling on th' floor. Lord, how them as got it did but swear at ivery word they spoke ! and all th' rest of us didn't know what to do for laughing. I thought, raelly, I should have died. ' That's capital,' says I, ' missis ; you couldn't have done better if you'd tried for seven year.' And, to tell th' truth, it was a good thing ; for it put sich a sudden damper on th' battle, that noat could be like it. They didn't think ony more about threshing one another, but jumped up and sent eight or ten stones through the window ; and I had them to pey for after, as I couldn't think of going to Mr. Wild about sich a job às that. I thought it was best to say noat about th' broken panes, and so make th' best on't. To satisfy them, I invited 'em all in, and gied 'em a quart of ale a-piece wi'out peying for, and let 'em dry theirselves by th' kitchen fire in at th' bargain. When they'd had a sup of ale, they soon begun to make it up agen, and by nine or ten o'clock at night we had sich a house for singing and noise as we haven't hardly once in a year. Nat Mills pead

th' ten pound like a man ; and for my part, as I'd won, I couldn't think of anything less than treating 'em with a bit of a supper o'er it, particularly as I see'd most of 'em was too far gone to eat above two penn'orth a-piece ; so I sends Bessy to th' butcher's, and we cooked three sheeps' heads and half-a-pound of beef-steaks among fifteen of 'em. Howiver, you see, as I had th' best appetite, and was head o' th' table an' all, I het them steaks myself, and cut up th' rest for them.

“ That same night, when we were in bed together, I says to my missis, ‘Kitty,’ says I, ‘we’ve got this ten pound, you see; and I think, as this cock of arn won it, it’s no more nor right as we should do summut to show ar inspect for him. What can we do?’ says I. ‘Well,’ says she, ‘it is no more than right, as you say, and raelly I feel very thankful to him myself, if I may speak my own feelings about it.’ ‘Sartinly,’ says I, ‘speak what you think at ony rate, for you know I’m always glad of your sentiments.’ ‘Well, Sam,’ says she, ‘you know this, that I always do th’ best I can when

I *do* speak,—I niver advise onythink as is likely to be wrong, if I know it ; and th' wisest head in all England can do no more.' 'No, no,' says I, 'to be sure ; if your head isn't so high larnt as some, it's worth more than a mony folkses as sticks it up more, for I know I should be very sorry to be wi'out it.' 'Well, then,' says she agen, 'if I mun express my mind upon this subject, I think we canna do better than let Tom Owen paint his likeness, and then we shall be able to see and talk about him after he's dead.' 'That's a good thought,' said I, 'a good thought : we'll do so. I'll tell you what, my wench,' says I, 'if iver I want onything finding out, and deciding how it shall be, I only have to ax you, and it's done. And where should we hing it when it's painted?' said I, 'for we haven't mony places in ar house for them things, and I shouldn't like it to get spoiled after it's finished.' 'Well, that I don't know,' says she, 'till I look : perhaps i' th' corner where th' bellows hings, or else on th' same neal as we used to hing th' frying-pan on afore th' handle got broke. But we mun see i'

th' morning.' And with that she turns round and goes to sleep. I was sleepy myself, for I'd had a sup of ale more than usual, and so I does th' same. But do you know, in th' middle o' th' night, she wakens me out of a very pleasant dream that I was having, and says she, 'Sam, I've thought of another thing just now.' 'What about?' said I, for I didn't think on it at first. 'Why,' says she, 'let us have that cock of arn painted on th' sign a-top o' th' bull.' 'Nay,' says I, 'it not do to have him a-top o' th' bull, neither. Folks would say they niver see'd sich a thing in their lives; they'd call it a cock-and-bull consarn altogether,' says I; and with that I laughed at her. 'You're soft, Sam,' says she agen: 'I don't mean on his back, but I mean on th' same board; I'd alter th' sign for him, and let us call ar house th' Cock instead o' th' Bull.' 'Now you say so, my wench,' said I, 'I do think that would be the best plan. He'd be remembered then, Kitty, when you and me is cold in th' grave.' 'Dunna talk o' thatten, for goodness' sake, Sam,' says she; 'I hate to think of them things.' And I believe she said

summut more, but I dropped asleep agen afore she'd said it. Howiver, young man, the up-shot o' th' matter was, as you see, we had his portrait tooken by Tom, here; and this very day is the first time of putting on't up. A very good likeness it is, and long may it hing there! say I." With which excellent toast the landlord again emptied his can.

An opportunity, for which he had some time been waiting, was here afforded Mr. Thurland to inquire what finally became of this famous bird himself; he having quite lost sight of him during the confusion of the last battle.

"Do you know, young man," said he, "he niver got over it; for though he had betten, as I've said, yet them two cocks was so well matched, that this cock of arn wasn't fit to faet another battle niver after. And what made it odder still,—as you'll admit this was a very singular and marketable circumference,—a white feather comed in his teal just after. Says I to my missis, when I see'd it, 'that's a natteral

proof he'll be good for noat no more but for th' table.' 'Oh, Sam,' said she, 'how can you think of eating him after sich a life as he's led? Why,' says she, 'I should as soon think of eating old Nibbs, th' pensioner.' 'Ay, ay,' said I, 'I know a little better than that. If you're soft, I aren't going to be soft an' all; and as he has won this wager, and got a reputation that'll stand him ony ends, I shouldn't like to see him lose it agen; so I think we had better feed him up and kill him to make safe on't: becos we know he canna be leathered after that; and if we keep him alive as he is, why I'll defy th' divil his-self to keep folks from wanting to make another match; and if they did, he would lose as sure as a gun.' That's just what I said. 'Well,' says she, 'your judgment's worth having, sartinly, Sam; you haven't lived all these years as if you'd bin brought up in a wood. You ought to know black from white,' says she. 'To be sure,' said I, 'that's very true;' and I do hope I haven't lived all my life wi'out larning summut,

at all events. So, do you know, we datarmined to do so, and begun to feed him up as fast as we could ; and when he had got a bit of meat on his bones, we killed him. That's no longer ago than yesterday ; and at this very minnit, young man, he's in that iron pot." And the landlord touched with his tobacco-pipe a cooking utensil of that description, then upon the fire, and from beneath the lid of which issued a steam very savory, without doubt, if any person could have been on the top of the chimney to smell it. " He's bin there iver since ten o'clock this morning. We meant to have had him for dinner ; but when my missis took him out about half-past twelve, he was as hard as a horse-collar : so she popped him in again, and says she, ' Sam, we mun be satisfied wi' a bit of bread and cheese, or else a frizzle of bacon, for he seems as if he not be enough till supper-time.' "

Here the landlord thrust the hesitating pipe into his mouth, and, with considerable emphasis, finally folded his lips.

We must just add,—and it gives us un-

feigned pleasure to be able to record such an unequivocal evidence of the sensibility of Mr. Thurland's feelings,—that he was quite shocked when his host had explained to him this ignoble conclusion of the life of so glorious a hero. Nevertheless, about five minutes after, when his nerves were somewhat recovered, he advanced to the fire-place, and paid his best respects to the memory of this immortal bird, by lifting up the pot-lid, and projecting his head so far into the mouth of the chimney as to imbibe some portion of the sweet savour of his remains.

It is no less gratifying to add, that this single smell extended his admiration of the deceased so much farther than it went before, that, as an especial favour to himself, he expressed a wish to the widowed landlord to be allowed, when they supped, to embalm a certain portion of the corpse in his own bowels. This pious request of his was immediately complied with; and accordingly he hesitated not to forego, for that night, the six-mile journey he had previously resolved upon: especially as his sen-

sible host promised him, should he tarry till the morrow, the identical room and bed to sleep in, which were formerly occupied by that "villainous rascad," the London cocker.

Let not the reader wonder at this story. Many a house and family hath in it a "cock OF ARN."

CHAPTER III.

IN WHICH THE POLITE READER MAY VERY POSSIBLY
FIND AN IMAGE OF HIMSELF ; AND CONCLUDING WITH
A PIECE OF ADVICE ESPECIALLY INTENDED TO GO
ROUND THE UPPER CIRCLES.

WHEN first the author was made acquainted with the circumstances detailed in the fourth and three following chapters, a doubt crossed his mind as to the prudence or propriety of inserting them in this biography ; because, when he found that they related to the same gentleman who, as a narrator, makes so conspicuous a figure in the preceding story, it appeared that his character had already been so fully developed as to render it next to impossible to give the reader satisfaction by any farther illustration of it. On deeper reflection, however, he

found reason to change his mind ; and, as they exhibit the talkative host in an entirely new light — that of a lover to the elegant young lady who has already been introduced to notice under his own endearing title of “ missis,” he hopes there will be found in them something very new, and extremely different to what has previously been advanced, notwithstanding that we have the same landlord for our hero.

At the same time, he wishes to take this opportunity of expressing his regret that the original relater of these episodes in Mr. Thurland’s life did not give them entirely in the third person, instead of leaving his characters to be so continually speaking for themselves ; especially as, in this case, the landlord’s phra-seology and grammar are not of the most refined description. However, he felt too fearful of softening those rude, but most bold strokes of nature, which are here and there visible throughout his self-told tales, to venture upon making any alteration in them, however desirable : for, though such a revision and correction might render them somewhat smoother and

more agreeable to the ear of a fastidious reader, it would be in great danger of also giving to the ideas and sentiments conveyed, something of that incongruous character which he remembers once to have observed in the pictures of a very refined artist. This skilful limner, it appears, had been engaged by a courtier of great delicacy of sentiment, and very classical taste, to execute some designs from that good poet, but very rude man, Theocritus. The painter, to warm his imagination, and the better fit himself for the proposed task, accordingly read afresh the works of this same poet of antiquity, Master Jonathan Theocritus; but being, as before said, a very refined artist, and consequently entirely ignorant how Nature herself carries on her works, or how mankind in a state of nature talk and act, he felt his exquisite modesty so shocked by the literal descriptions and the uncouth phrases which abound in the works of that vulgar soul, that, as often as he read, he blushed. To depict on canvass as rudely as his author had described, he felt to be impossible. All must be riddled through the sieve

of his own cultivated and purified imagination. Accordingly he sat down to the task of clothing Theocritus in imperial purple. The author's plain-born shepherds he dressed in the consular robe; just as we might endeavour to convey the sentiments and opinions of Samuel Pogson, innkeeper, in something of the language of Cicero. His shepherdesses he dared not make so free with as to represent with legs "forked like a man," but, for decency's sake, he made them all of a piece from the body to the toes; and, to complete the drawing, all his goats he depicted of the neuter gender.

This is quite sufficient of our illustration to suit the present occasion; and the author doubts not is also enough to convince the reader that his motives for not attempting to refine the preceding and the following stories, are laudable and just. He would not wish to cut a ridiculous figure, by uniting together what Horace himself hath declaimed against.

After this, but one thing remains to be said. If, reader, you still cannot take us exactly as we are, and relish the kernel because of its

rough rind, lay the book out of hand altogether, for it is very possible that Nature never designed us for you, nor you for us; since she does occasionally produce, not only men and wives, but also authors and readers, who reciprocally agree best when asunder.

CHAPTER IV.

SAM POGSON'S COURTSHIP.

WHILE Mr. Thurland, his host Mr. Pogson, and that gentleman's "missis," were at supper, Bilberry, being placed in a situation at the table opposite to that agreeable lady Mrs. P., had a very convenient opportunity afforded him for inspecting the personal beauties, and remarking the elegant qualifications she possessed. Nor was this opportunity lost upon him; for besides that he had now arrived at an age when such matters began to possess a very curious interest with him, he had also imbibed so much liquor since his tarrying under their roof as gave a still keener edge to the spirit of discovery that way, which at all times he possessed in no ordinary degree. However, it is

no part of our purpose to detail the various winning graces of manner, and the peculiar excellencies of feature, that ultimately found favour before his sight. Let it suffice that the impression she made upon Mr. Thurland's mind was, on the whole, a very favourable one ; in-
somuch indeed that, during the progress of their meal, our young gentleman paid her every attention in his power, anticipating her wants in the articles of salt and mustard no less than fourteen times : though it is but due to the lady herself to observe, that her real demand for those stimulating condiments was by no means so extensive as, from this circumstance, might be supposed ; only she being one of those modest people who know not how to refuse a piece of gratuitous politeness on the part of strangers, felt it a duty incumbent on her to take, out of pure compliment, a portion of both, whenever Mr. Bilberry invited her to them, whether she wanted them or not. Under these circumstances, it is not to be wondered at that, on the termination of the repast, Mrs. Pogson should have accumulated upon her own plate

nearly the whole contents of the mustard-pot ; and that vessel, according to the account left us, was anything but a small one. Should it concern the reader to know the conclusion of so insignificant an affair, we have the satisfaction of informing him, that, after the things were removed, Miss Bessy, whose name has before been mentioned, undertook to transfer the overplus condiment back to its original tank ; and, accordingly, the whole overflow was scraped from the rim of Mrs. Pogson's plate into the mustard-pot again.

Shortly after supper, Bilberry had the inexpressible delight of beholding those two most famous characters, whom the host had mentioned in his story of the cock-battle, Messrs. Nat Mills, and Frederic Skinner the blacksmith ; for, notwithstanding the untoward events which in former times had occurred between them and Mr. Pogson, they yet continued to pay him a nightly visit, about this hour of the clock, for the purpose of chalking on a few more cans of ale, the whole list of which was regularly rubbed off at the week's end. The

fact was, neither of them very much delighted in the landlord's company; but then he was such an easy, good-natured sort of man, when not put out of his own way, that they could get more ale on the strap with him than with any other publican in the village; and that acted as an imperceptible tie between them, which nothing, save payment on demand, could break.

Just for the sake of equalization and sociality, young Thurland entered into a little conversation with this couple of worthies, endeavouring very carefully to abstain from any mention of the affair of the cock, lest he should involve himself in a factious dispute that might terminate in a manner not the most agreeable to souls peaceably disposed. But, in spite of all his caution, he very soon perceived the conversation verging towards a second edition of the story he had already heard from the mouth of his host; only he fancied there was this difference perceptible in prospective between the two, that the latter of them, issuing from a precisely opposite press, promised to give a

version much more in favour of those two gentlemen than was that by Mr. Pogson.

Nevertheless, Bilberry felt not interest enough in the affair to make any inquiries. He allowed the conversation to die a natural death, and then began to address the landlord upon that far more agreeable subject, his wife Kitty.

Inspired by his host's ale, he spoke very eloquently upon the beauty of Mrs. P., and most highly commended her many excellent qualities as a housekeeper; to all which the landlord listened with evident satisfaction. He then replied in these words:

“Ay, young man, you speak true; she is a good un at onything; and as for her beauty, no man need desire noat prettier, if he knows when to be satisfied. She's as handsome as a May morning; and I know th' value of her, for at one time I seriously thought I shouldn't have got hold on her. We'd a good bit of trouble afore we were married, I assure you; and more than mony young folks has, or else I think they wouldn't get done quite so soon as some of 'em does. For raelly, to speak th'

truth, since we were married, lads and wenches seem to get so impudent, and so full of themselves, there's no telling what they'll do next. I'm sure when I think on what them consarns used to be when I was a lad, in comparison wi' what they are now, I am astounded to think we haven't mony more natterals on th' parish to what we have, though, God knows, we've plenty of 'em already."

"Sad thing, sir," said Bilberry, with an assumed air of gravity; "but, as I have heard my mother say many a time, the world gets worse and worse as it goes on."

"It does get worse, that's true," replied Mr. Pogson, "for act'ally we niver should have thought of sich things when I were a young man, as I see done here all round ivery day of my life. I don't know the reason on't, but, for all that, I can see folks get very brazen. Why, here's Joe Smith, a lad,—I call him a lad,—that lives not three hundred yards from this very house, he isn't turned twenty-one, and yet that young divil, as I thould call him so, goes all at once one morning, afore hardly onybody

knowed he'd iver bin a-courting, and gets married to Mary Hobson, wi' a licence that he'd bought in private. He took th' whole parish by astonishment; and raelly, when it was first told to me and my missis, we couldn't believe it. But, howiver, when we see'd 'em living together, we were forced, whether we could or not. So says I to her, 'Missis,' says I, 'if you and me had done i' that way when we were courting, ar faithers and mothers would have tied us to th' bed-post till we larnt better.' 'Ay, Sam,' says she, 'that they would, and have sarved us right an' all.' No, no, young man, things isn't now as they was then. Raelly I think there ought to be a law made for keeping young men and wimin apart from one another, till they're twenty at least; and then I'd have it so regulated that none of 'em should court less than three or four year afore they got married. That would keep things in summut of a reg'lar course of natur; but in this how of going on, one hardly knows ony difference between children and married folks. I wish they all had th' same trouble to go through as

we had, and then they wouldn't be in sich a hurry to get married as some of 'em is. For I'm sure me and my missis—she was Miss Catherine Strunts at that time, though they called her Kate for short—we'd bother and vexation enough to tire out ony body but us; and, to tell th' truth, we niver should have bin married after all, if both of us hadn't stuck to it like wax up to th' last minnit. Ay, Lord! I niver think upon that time wi'-out remembering what a man as called at ar house when my old faither kep' it, once said in this very kitchen: 'Matches is made in heaven and dipped in hell for brimstone,' said he. It was a flowery speech, young man; but it's as true as th' day is long, you may 'pend on't. I've proved it, you know, in my own self, and there's no contradiction to that, ony how. Here, my wench,"—and the landlord, who appeared to be in his own person a very good customer to himself, shouted very lustily to his wife, who sat mending his stockings in the bar,—“gie me a glass of gin and watter, my wench, for sake o' them old recollec-

tions." And then turning again to Mr. Thurland, "She remembers 'em," said he, "as well as if it was but yesterday; and better than I do, I'll bet ony money, for them things sticks in wimin's minds as long as iver they live. She's got a valentine at this very day, that I sent her at first; and, though it is so long since, she keeps it in spite of all I can say, and 'll hardly let me have a peep at it, though it's one of my own, for fear I should snatch it out of her hand, and burn it; as I have often enough threatened to do, if I can lay hands on't, come on't what may. Them things is all very good in their places, and when one's young, and doesn't know how to go on wi'out 'em; but after folks is married, they ought to be done with, and either tore up or burnt, becos it looks rather fewlish to see grown-up folks that has got all they want wi' one another, setting store by sich soft things as them. But I canna argue her out on't, though I've tried all th' ways in my power. She says, 'Sam,' says she, 'it's all of no use. That valentine made a great compression on my mind at th' time,

and I not have it destroyed for nobody. It does you no harm,' says she, 'and so I'll keep it by me as long as I live.' And more than that, I'd defy ony man to get out of her.

"It is a good valentine, that's sartin; and sich a one as I'd recommend to ony man that's in th' same conswoption as I were then. In fact, I have advised two or three young chaps that I knowed, to get theirs as much like it as they could; and it has always happened, as it says of these great med'cines, that it proved infallible.

"But I mustn't over-run my story, for I shall have to tell you a little more about it when I get to that part o' th' tale; becos, as I have told you so much as this, I might as well tell you all th' rest, just afore we go to bed; and then, young man, you may perhaps hear summut in't as will be of sarvis to yourself if iver you should get in luv wi' ony wench on your own account. Becos, you mind, what I'm going to say isn't speculation like what you see in bewks; it's all natteral truth and fact, and them is the things for young men to larn from."

Bilberry, who had listened to his host with the profound attention worthy so important a subject, observed that he should feel much gratified to hear this story of his courting adventures; while the landlord, who evidently felt flattered by the interest his discourse commanded, assured him he should tell something well worth listening to, even if Parson Wild himself were there to hear it.

Accordingly, having taken a few minutes to refresh his memory, he began in his accustomed manner :

“ Well, you see, then, young man, that I was one of them sort of people that fall in luv very early in life. To speak with a degree of accuracy, I should think I begun to look at th’ wenches when I were about fifteen. But then, you know, it was that sort of luv as is all up and down, and here and there, and off and on; for o’ somehow, I didn’t settle to nobody, though there was plenty of gels that would have bin glad to have jumped at me, no doubt, as there always is in sich places as this, to have ony man,—’specially if he has a comely look with

him, as I believe I had, and not mony better. I goes on in that touch-and-go sort of way some time, till I have my doubts whether there was iver a wench all round about that I hadn't spoke to, more or less, upon that point. At last, you know, I gets myself a sort of character among 'em for being a kind of weather-cock wi' wimin; and that makes me reflect a bit in my own mind. So I says to myself, if this is the case, it is about time to drop it, or else next I shall have th' parson lecturing me about it in th' week-day. So all at once I takes it into my head to say noat no more to none of 'em; and I kep' myself out of all th' Plough-Mondays, and th' harvest-homes, and th' dancings at wakes, and all sich like things, where sweet-hearts is most made. Well, that, you're very sure, they couldn't but obsarve; and some folks gied me pretty broad hints about it, if I would but take 'em; but I takes no notice, except that I turned up my nose and said noat. At last it comes to be a sort of town's talk; and th' wenches that had bin the first to complain about me, they're in a bewilderment consarn-

ing it. Howiver I holds out, for as there was nobody to take my place, thinks I, I'll punish you a bit; and so I did, and soundly too, as you may judge, for I'm blamed if at last of all some of 'em couldn't wait no longer, and they begun to come a-courting *me*. I don't say it in praise of myself, you know; but sich was the fact. Howiver, you may guess for yourself whether it were so or not, when I tell you this circumference:—One afternoon I were coming down Otter Lane from th' fields, and who should I see, hinging and slinking about, but Jin Smackson, on purpose, I foresee, to get me to speak to her: and when I got up to where she was, 'Ay, Sammy Pogson,' says she, 'what a while it is since I see'd you. Where have you bin putting yourself?' says she; 'and you niver speak to one when one does happen to meet you onywhere.' 'No, Jin,' says I; 'I've got somebody as takes all my speaking to theirselves:' for, you see, I thought I'd make her jealous. 'Have you?' says she, and her face turned as red as fire; 'who is it?' 'Them's fewls as tells all they know,' says I to

her ; ‘ I aren’t going to let you into my secrets, ony more than that she’s as pritty a wench as ony in this parish, and prittier than three parts out of four on’t.’ ‘ Ay, Sammy,’ says she, ‘ you’re ligging ; I dunna belave you.’ ‘ It’s as true as you stand there,’ says I, ‘ and I’ll tell you a bit more, Jin,—I mean to marry her very soon, and then you’ll see wi’ your own eyes.’ ‘ What a ligger thou art, Sammy,’ says she, in reply to that ; ‘ you know we’ve proved you that afore now ; so I wouldn’t belave you if you were to swear it on th’ Bible.’ ‘ Would you belave me,’ says I, ‘ if I was to gie you a kiss wi’ it ?’—for raelly, young chap, I had bin looking at her face till I felt as if I should like to gie her one. ‘ Ay, Sammy,’ says she, ‘ you shouldn’t talk o’ thatten, though perhaps I might belave you, then.’ I knowed what that meant ; so I goes up and I huggles her round th’ neck, and gives her three or four very big uns. But for all that she did as good as ax me to gie her a few more, and she was a modest wench an’ all ; so as I were natterally very obliging that way, without ony more to do I let her have ’em.

Now, young man, if that wasn't proof of a wench courting a lad,—howiver, a young man I was at that time,—why I raelly don't know what could be, that's all. But I wouldn't have her for a permanency for all that, as you must know I had just afore got one glimpse of Kitty Strunts, that is now my missis here; and o' somehow I felt at th' very first sight of her as if I niver should like nobody else. So when I'd kissed Jin plenty, I leaves her and goes home.

“ This, you mind, was in the autumn, and from that time as I first see'd my missis, I took no more notice of nobody but her. Howiver, for all I was so vartuous myself, I didn't get a sight of Kitty half so often as I should have liked; for her faither, old Strunts, lived up where he lives now, at th' Far-leys farm yonder, and there's no road without one goes straight to the house itself, so we had no opportunity of meeting by chance; and I wasn't brazened enough at that time to make it 'specially my business to go there after Kitty; particularly as I had niver had no opportunity of speaking my sentiments and feelings to herself in private

aforehand. Thinks I, I'll wait as well as I can till I do get a chance of breaking my mind to her. So I waited week after week, and was always on the look-out ; but things run agen me, and no chance of speaking to her comed in my way. The reason was, you see, their house, th' Far-leys, is quite out of the road of ivery-body. It stands in the middle of the open country, and so I niver could get to go by it at no time ; and as Kitty herself was very useful at home in th' dairy, and milking, and that sort of thing, she niver hardly comed down into th' village. These, you will confess, was very damping circumferences to begin with but I didn't care—I wasn't going to be put out that way. I stopped a bit longer, and a bit longer ; and in short I stopped till the middle of winter, but it was all moonshine. So says I to myself, one day when I was putting my old faither's horses into th' stable — for he kep' this public-house at the time I'm speaking about — says I to myself, full of thoughts of Kitty Strunts, I've stopped and stopped, till raelly I can't stop no longer ;—and that's true,

young man, for you see natur will hold out a sartin time, but not beyond that. — Well, thinks I, if I was to take a walk up to th' Far-leys at once, and gie 'em an explantation of what my meaning is, perhaps it would be th' best in th' end, and it would be sure to ease my mind above a bit, at all events. To be sure, I argued to myself, I don't know what sort of folks they are ; I niver had noat to do with 'em in my life : but, for all that, I should guess they wouldn't think it noat out o' th' common way, if a young chap was to go up to their door, and say at once that he had conceived a liking to Kitty. I don't know, in general, how they do go on in sich cases as these, said I to myself, but this seems to me the most straightforward of ony I can think on, and honesty is the best policy after all. So what does I do, but then and there datarmines to act in that way. I had a bit of time on my hands that very afternoon, and, as I knowed it was best to strike while the iron was hot, I resolved to make use on't for my own sake, and go up to old Strunts's without ony more to do. I

didn't want my faither nor mother to know onything about it; so I cleans my shoes, washes myself, slips up stairs privately, and puts on my Sunday clothes from top to bottom. When I had done that and got me ready, it comed into my head all on a sudden, that perhaps they'd see me going down stairs agen in my best coat and breeches; and I knowed, if either of 'em did, it was all up for that day; as they would want to know where I was going to, and then make me go and pull 'em all off again. So, to prevent that, I didn't wait to consider ony more, but as my chamber was at the back o' th' house, I gets straight out of my own window. Howiver, you may guess my head was pritty full of luv, for I quite forgot what was under, though I knowed it so well; and when I had got out and let go with my hands, I drops splash into th' swill-tub. Ay, that I did, and got clean up to the middle in sour swill, with all my Sunday clothes on. Jinks! says I, what will ar faither do when he knows of this mess? For, you understand, at that time, I didn't pay for my own clothes. It

took me so much by astonishment, that I couldn't think of getting out again directly, but there I stood like a fowl in th' tub, considering on't. At last I cocks my leg over th' side and scrambles out. If it had bin summer-time, I could have done with it very well ; but on a cold, frosty day as that was, in the depth of winter, sich a consarn as that was none so comfortable. But, as good luck would have it, nobody see'd me, and so I strove to accommodate it to my own mind, as well as I could, by considering for whose sake this had happened. I thought upon warm Kitty Strunts, and made no complaint."

CHAPTER V.

POGSON'S COURTSHIP CONTINUED.

“WHEN I first got out, I hardly knowed what to do. I didn’t like the idea of going into th’ house to expose all th’ secret and get laughed at in at the bargain. And then agen, when I looked and smelt of myself, I thought I wasn’t exactly in a pickle to go a-courting for th’ first time. But what could I do? Things were as they were, and I hardly knowed what to set about for th’ best. Howiver, you’re sartin it wasn’t safe to stand there debating on’t, for fear some of ’em should come out and catch me. So I goes off to a haystack, and wipes myself down as clean as I could; and when I thought I had got myself a bit sweet, I forms my resolution and goes straight to old Strunts’s at the

Far-leys. For says I to myself as I went along, it isn't always them that smells sweetest that is best, and parsonal merit 'll outshine any accident of this kind : as you see, I wasn't without my conceit that I had summut in me more than some folks has.

“ Now, young man, you remember I said afore it was a very cold, frosty day. So it was ; and the snow lay knee-deep on the ground, and in some places up to th' middle. It is a good two mile walk from ar house up to th' Far-leys ; and though I walked pritty sharp to keep myself warm, do you know I couldn't do it ; for though I had wiped most of the bits of swill off of the outside of my breeches, yet you are very sartin I hadn't wiped the wet out of 'em. And so it all froze in ; and long afore I got to Strunts's, my breeches was as stiff as horns with ice : and when, after all, I comed to sit down in 'em, they broke clean in two at th' knees.

“ As I was going to turn off o' th' highway through the fields up to their house, do you know I couldn't find th' road, for it was patched

clean up with snow, and nobody had bin down since the night afore to mark it out with their feet. But I guesses at it as well as I could, for after all, you mind, I had made some remarks on it afore. Well, upon the whole, I goes on pritty right, considering that I had niver bin up it in my life ; only I now and then got into some terrible deep drifts that nigh-hand smothered me. And once I had the misfortin to run slap bang into the middle of a hedge which had got covered up with snow, so as to deceive one's sight ; and there I scratted myself rarely. But that was not the worst of it ; for you see, in struggling to get out agen, I very unluckily catches my coart laps on a hedge-stake, and, afore I could give back, it ripped 'em boath clean off. When I perceived it, I sighed ; and says I, it is all up for going to Strunts's now, howiver ; for I couldn't think of showing myself afore onybody in that state. I tried to stick 'em on again, but it wouldn't do at all ; and so at last I doubled 'em up, and tucked 'em under my arm. Even then I could hardly form my resolution to go back agen ; for, you see, luv

is sich a strong thing, one can't get over it all at once. I tried to think of some way or another for hiding th' accident; when it comed into my head all at once, that if I kept myself straight for'ard, it wouldn't be seen at all. With that thought my sperits gets up. So off I goes agen, though I didn't like it much; only I felt as if I could bear onything for sake of Kitty Strunts. When I got nigh the house, ay, dear! how queer I did but feel. My heart was all in lumps, and my face—ay, it felt like as if it wasn't mine. I don't know how to describe it, only it seemed as if I was shrivelled up into my skin like a wizzened apple. In fact, it isn't possible to tell you half of what I felt at that time; but if iver you have bin in a similar way yourself, you may have some bit of a notion how I was altogether.

“After I had opened the yard-gate, my mind misgives me, and I turns round all at once to go back. But at the same minnit I bethought me of that place behind, and I whips round agen with my face to the house, like lightning.

“As I had niver bin there afore, and didn't

know none o' th' folks except by sight, I thought it best to go to the back-door ; so I plucks up my sperits by thinking I might as well do it at first as last, and gives a knock at the door without any more hizzytation. Who should open it but this very same Kitty herself that I wanted to see. She waited with the door in her hand for me to say what I had come for ; but raelly my lips was so stiff with cold, that I couldn't say a single word. Instead, I fixes my eyes on her and looks as mild as possible in my state. She see'd how I was, and says she, ' Who do you want, sir ? ' I works my lips about to make 'em pliable, and then says I, ' Ay, Kitty, my dear duck, I've comed a-courting *you*.' And then I goes up to fetch her a kiss. She burst out a-laughing, and bangs th' door in my face ; and it was as nigh as a toucher knocking me down backwards off o' th' step. I raps agen, for I was datarmed to see it out, but she was cruel enough not to come ; only I see'd her standing a good way in the house, and trying to peep over the blind to laugh at me. That I could not bear. To have sich a reception from her

after what I had gone through that day on her account, raelly it was more than I knowed how to put up with. She was the very last in the world as iver I should have looked to for sich as that. I burst out a-crying, for I couldn't help it; and I run out of the yard, and down the fields back agen as fast as I could, roaring all th' way like a bull.

“ Says I to myself as I went back agen, I'll niver speak nor look at Kitty Strunts no more; for if she's got sich a heart as that, dom me if I would gie a can of ale for her! and I pulled my best hat off of my head, and banged it on the ground for madness.

“ If I had foreseen sich a reception as this, said I,—and I spoke up, you know, becos there was nobody there to hear me,—if I had foreseen that she would have behaved to me in this scandalous way, would I have put my Sunday clothes on? No, says I, fowl as I was. Onything would have bin good enough to have gone there in. If I had put noat on but my shirt, and gone with my shoes all over dirt, and my face as black as a tinker; that would have bin

better than she desарves, said I ; and then, for revenge, I broke a row of her faither's palings clean down, and laid 'em across th' horse-road to be run o'er. But them, you know, was only my mad doings at th' time, for I felt as if I couldn't help showing my airs a bit.

“ When I got home agen, it was quite dark ; so I slunk into the house as sly as I could, and got a candle. Just as I was going up stairs, my mother see'd me : ‘ Sam,’ says she, ‘ what have you bin after ? ’ ‘ Noat, mother,’ says I, ‘ I'm only going up stairs a bit.’ And then I run up as fast as I could to get out of her road. I pulls my new clothes off, slips my others on, blows the candle out, and comes down stairs as if noat had happened. When I got into the kitchen,—‘ Where have you bin to, Sam ? ’ says my mother ; ‘ here your faither's bin wanting you these two hours, and couldn't find you nowhere.’ ‘ I've bin nowhere,’ says I, ‘ only about the fields yonder.’ ‘ You shouldn't go out o' th' way without saying summut,’ said she ; and so that matter dropped through. Next morning I takes the first opportunity to tie my

coart up, and go privately to ar tealor to have it mended. He said he could make a job of it ; and so he did, and a good un too. I pead him for it out o' th' till, for I dursn't ax my faither ; and, to tell the truth of myself, that was the first time and the last in all my life that iver I took a copper out o' th' till unknown to onybody, and I hope in sich a case as that it was to be excused. Altogether, I managed it so that neither faither nor mother iver knowed onything about it : and I took care niver to tell 'em myself from that day to this ; and they are both dead now, so I niver shall.

“ Well, young man, I felt so mad about her usage, and the misfortins that had happened to me in at the bargain had put my pipe so completely out, that I datarmined I would have noat no more to do with Kitty ; no, not even if she were to come and ax me in plain language to have her at ony price. But, for all that, do you know, in a week or two she kep' coming into my head in spite of my teeth, and I now and then catched myself out thinking on her

when I didn't think on't. I went on looking at th' brightest side of her, day after day, till I comes to see her a little sweeter in my eye than I had done at first ; and in private I felt as if I should like to speak to her, and try her on agen. I blamed myself for it domdedly, but then you know one can't go agen natur. At last, about a three-week after my first try at old Strunts's, I was sitting sulking in th' house one Sunday morning, becos my faither had bin laying it on me above a bit for not going to church. I said, and I stuck to it, that it was no use me going to church, 'cos I only dropped asleep and snored at sich a rate that I wakened iverybody else ; and, better than do that, I might as well sit at home and read a chapter or two out o' the Bible myself. 'I'll tell you what, Sam,' said he, 'if you don't mind what you're about, you'll come to be kest out of all society ; for you know you've no excuse. Your grandfaither used to go up to the last week of his life, though he was as deaf as a post ; but what of that ? He *did* go, and that's enough.

And do you do the same, and then you can't be wrong.'

"I was just going to give him sich a answer to that as he wouldn't have liked, when I happened to throw my eye through that very front window there, and who should I see go by towards church but Kitty Strunts, with her faither and mother. I jumps up as if I had burnt my teal, and I turns it off in this way. 'Faither,' says I, 'I'm convinced. I'll go to church directly; and, more than that, I don't think I shall go to sleep at all.' 'Now, that is summut like,' says he, 'you talk now as you should do. Make haste, Sam,' says he, 'for it is getting late.' 'You have no call to tell me of that,' says I; 'I'll be ready in two minits.' And with that I scampers up stairs, puts on my clothes, and starts to church.

"When I got there, I took care to get into the seat behind Strunts's. I plants myself close to Kitty; and when the saxton gave out the hymn, I looks sharp to find the place in my bewk, and I helped it over to her. Ay, dear! what a look she did but gie me. 'Dom

me,' says I, though I didn't speak it up, being in the church; 'dom me if this don't pey for all:' and raelly I could hardly help fetching her a kiss in the back o' th' neck. Howiver, I checked myself, and sat down. When they begun to sing, I quite forgot in my gladness what I was about; and, thinking of noat but luv and sich, I joined chorus with piece of an old song that I once heard sung by a man as got drunk at ar house. I'll tell you what them two lines is, if I can think on 'em."

And here the landlord scratched the end of his nose for the purpose of brightening his memory.

"These is them, young man, if I'm right, and I think I am.

'Although that Miss Kitty's so charming and fair,
I not have your daughter,—I not have your daughter,
without the grey mare.'

"Them is them, I believe; and sich was my transportation at that time, I joined these involuntarily to the fifty-fourth psalm. Very lucky for me, nobody perceived it afore I did myself; and I took care not to do it twice.

“ When church was over, I tries to speak to Kitty in the crowd as we were going out, but she didn’t hear me. Howiver, I see’d I had made some sort of a compression on her, and so I goes home agen as light as a feather. When I got into the kitchen, my mother looks at me ; ‘ Sam,’ says she, ‘ what have you done with your waistcoat ? ’ ‘ Why, noat,’ says I, and I looked down at it ; and, like a great gorbuson as I was, I had forgot to put it on, and there if I hadn’t bin to church without my waistcoat.

“ After that, I thought of noat but Kitty. I see’d I had made an opening ; and says I, now I have got my foot in, I’ll push forward, come on’t what may. So I tries all the ways in my power to get to see her agen, and lay my sentiments open to her. But it seemed as if I couldn’t prosper at the rate I wanted. She didn’t come to church the next Sunday, nor the Sunday after ; and in week-days I knowed she had no time to get down into the village ; so, in the end, I bethought me of sending her a bit of a letter. Well, I sits me down to draw

one up in th' rough on the back of a bill that a doctor had left at ar house ; for, thinks I, it is none the worse for being printed on one side. But o' somehow I couldn't do it to my mind ; for, you see, I niver had no eddication worth speaking about. So I bothered myself a good while, till I flung it into the fire altogether to get shut on't. Howiver, the month of February was coming on, and I looked to that for relief ; as, you see, at that time sich chaps as me, that has no understanding of how these things is done, by laying out the value of a pint of ale, we may get a proper sort of letter ready-made to ar hands. But, between the time I have bin speaking on, and the fourteenth of February, I gets another sight of Kitty one afternoon as she was going through the town with her faither in their cart.

“ I couldn't get to speak to her, you're sure ; so I gies her another of my pleasant looks, and she smiles agen at me like an angel. That encourages me more and more to go on with it ; and I waits as impatient as a child for th' fourteenth.

“ When that day comed at last, I takes my opportunity to slip down to Wetherton, to old Toozle’s the bookseller. Mrs. Toozle was in the shop ; and when I got in, ‘ What do you want ? ’ says she. ‘ If you plaze, missis,’ says I, ‘ I want a valentine ; a good un,’ says I ; ‘ one o’ th’ best you’ve got.’ ‘ That depends on your own taste,’ says she. ‘ We have all sorts, to suit different people.’ And then she fetched some out of the window. ‘ Should you like one with a rose ? ’ says she. ‘ Well, I don’t know,’ says I, ‘ let’s see a bit.’ So I looks up to the top o’ th’ shop, and then I says, ‘ No, I think I shouldn’t. If you plaze, I’ll have one with a big heart, and a spit through it.’ The missis was very civil, for says she, ‘ That is as good a choice as ony ; and will you have it painted or not painted ? ’ ‘ Oh,’ says I, for I didn’t stand about that, ‘ painted to be sure. Let’s have it bleeding ony how, as I reckon them speaks most luv, don’t they ? ’ She smiled red in the face at that, and said as how they did. ‘ Come then,’ says I, ‘ let me have one of them. I want it as strong as I can get ;

the strongest they make, for you see I'ze very warm on her.' She pretended to wipe her face in her apron at that, but I see'd it was all sham ; so says I, ' Missis Toozle, what sort of a one did your husband send you afore you were married ? ' ' Oh,' says she, ' we hadn't sich things then.' ' Dom you,' said I in a pleasant way, ' you know well enough you had, only you not tell. I reckon he sent you sich a chap as this ; ' and I picks one up off o' th' counter. It was a big heart like that of mine ; only, instead of bleeding, it was put down to frizzle on a gridiron in th' flames.

" I told her to lap mine up in the right way, becos I knowed noat about lapping letters up, and she did. I pead a groat for it, and gied her a halfpenny over for lapping on't up ; and I niver in my life laid out a groat as satisfied me better. And that was the very same valentine as my missis keeps by her at this day.

" When I got home, I says noat to nobody ; but I signs my name inside, and writes directions in the best hand I could, and then I gives Joe Smith—the same chap as I told you has

just got married, a few hundred yards from here,—I gives him half a pint of small beer and a halfpenny—for he was but a little lad then—to take it up to the Far-leys, and ask for Kitty Strunts, and gie it into nobody's hands but hers."

CHAPTER VI.

IN THIS CHAPTER THE IGNORANT READER MAY LEARN
HOW TO CARRY ON A COURTSHIP.

“ AFTER that, I waits with great anxiousness to see if should hear onything from Kitty ; but I didn’t of some days. At last, when I was about giving it all up, a chap in a white smock-frock comes into ar house one afternoon and calls for a can of ale. He said he wanted it fresh drawn, just for sake of getting my faither out of the road ; and as soon as iver his back was turned, he motions with his head for me to go to him. He whispers in my ear, and says he, ‘ You are Samel Pogson, aren’t you ?’ ‘ I am,’ says I, ‘ and what of that ?’ ‘ Then,’ says he, ‘ I have summut for you,’ and he pops a nice clean little letter into my hand. ‘ It’s from ar

young missis, Kitty Strunts,' says he, 'as you'll obsarve when you look inside. Only you mun mark this, Pogson,' said he, 'I gie it you in confidence, for she told me to let nobody see it but your own private eyes.' 'I'll be as close as cobbler's wax,' says I, 'that she may 'pend on.' And just at that minnit my faither comed up out o' th' cellar and put a stop to the conversion, or else I had summut more as I wished to say about it. You may think I was in a pritty hurry to look into it; so I pretends to go into the stable to see after the horses, and there I sits me down on a truss of hay, and pulls it out. I read it over and over a good mony times, and I do assure you I thought it were a very catpittle letter. She went on to say how she was much grieved at me running away from their house in sich a hurry as I did, for she meant to have let me in if I had only stopped long enough. Upon reading that I feels mad, and stops reading the letter to blow myself up for a dom fewl in not waiting to see it out. But as that was of no use now, I goes on agen perousing what more she had said. And I see'd

in th' end of all, she had made me a invitation to go up to their house that same night by moonlight, and meet her in the yard at seven o'clock. I jumps at that, you know, and dances about the stable a bit ; and then I sits down to read it all o'er agen. I gets up and dances agen ; and then I gied ivery horse in th' stable half a quartern of beans extra, for gladness about Kitty Strunts. And after that I crumples the letter up into my pocket, and goes into the house.

“ Now you mun understand, young man, my faither and mother, boath of 'em, was that sort of stupid people as not let their lads go out after dark if they can help it. So I feels myself to be in a nick very awkward. I was datarmed, you know, in my own mind to keep my appointment with Kitty ; but then, how was I to manage it ? For that was the thing that puzzled me more than all the rest. At all events, I gets myself ready beforehand ; becos I knowed if I had a chance of getting off, it was of no use if I weren't dressed and cleaned fit to be seen by her at the same time. I looks sharp about

slipping my Sunday clothes on ; and to keep my faither and mother from seeing them, I claps my smock-frock on a-top of 'em, and just walks about the house in an ordinary way, as if I didn't mean onything very shortly. At last, about half-past six, I swallows my tea in a hurry ; leaves my faither and mother getting theirs ; and slips into that passage for my hat, hoping, as I did, to slive out unobsarved. But my faither overheard me, and he shouts out, ' Sam ! where are you going to ? ' ' Nowhere,' says I, ' only I don't feel sure whether I fastened th' sheep up to-night, and I sha'n't sleep if I dunna go and satisfy myself.' ' You should have took care of that,' says he, ' for you know it isn't the first time I have told you about it.' And with that I slips out o' th' house without stop-ping for ony more, though I heard him shouting after me as hard as he could. I makes all the haste in my power up towards the Far-leys, for I knowed if I could once get clean off of ar house, I was safe.

“ But I heard my faither come to th' door and shout up th' road to me to come back. I

skulks under the hedge till he thought he couldn't make me hear, and went in agen; and then goes forward, sartin of being clear off. When I got up nigh to Strunts's, I pulls my smock-frock over my ears, and stuffs it under one o' th' haystacks till I comed back agen. The moon was up about a yard high, like a toasted Cheshire cheese; and I could see her eyes, nose, and mouth, as plain as I can see yours as this moment. So, as there was sich a good light, I casts my eyes about for Kitty Strunts; but I didn't see her, for I had my doubts if it had struck seven o'clock yet.

“ The wind blowed very keen indeed, and more particularly to a chap standing still as I was: so I goes and rears myself straight up in a corner, to get out of the reach of the storm; and there I waits her coming with some impatience. In a bit I hears the church-clock, a good way off, strike seven; and that did me as much good as if onybody had gied me a guinea. I don't think it was two minutes after that, afore I heard their back-door open, for it squeaked on th' hinges; and

I quaked, and said to myself, here she comes. And so it was her as sure as I sit here ; she was as constant to her time as if she had gone by clock-work. As soon as I see'd her, I comes out of my corner, and goes up towards her ; and though I hadn't bin able to make up my mind what I should say first, yet I trusted to natur to be my guide, for she always puts the right thing into one's head when the time comes. Howiver, I'll tell you what it was I said ; and then, young man, you can judge for yourself. I goes up to her, and says I, ' Ay, Kitty Strunts, how glad I am to see you. How do you do to-night ? I hope you haven't got a nasty cold, nor th' tooth-ache, nor rheumatiz, nor noat of that sort, for them things isn't pleasant.'

“ That was the first speech I made to her ; for you see, young chap, I take it to be a good plan to ax after their healths, as it makes 'em think one has some consarn for 'em. In answer to that she said, she was very glad to see me ; so I puts out my hand : ' Give us hold of you then,' says I, and I catches hold of

her frock, and pulls her up agen me a bit nearer. ‘Very cold weather this, isn’t it, Kitty?’ said I; ‘I assure you, I fun it very cold coming up here from ar house.’ ‘You’re right, Samel,’ says she; ‘it is very cold indeed, for it has gone and froze ar tap up in the yard, and we canna get no rain-watter,’ says she; ‘and that very seldom happens.’ ‘Well,’ says I agen, ‘I don’t know what we mun do, without we try to keep one another warm o’ somehow.’ And wi’ that, I tries to give her my first kiss; but she was shy, and turned off: so, instead of sticking on her cheek, it tumbled down on to th’ floor. I goes at her a second time; and then she stood to it, and let me come on, for you see perseverance overcomes onything. After that, we natterally got a bit free with one another; and we walked up and down the stack-yards talking matters over, and looking at the moon and stacks; but I couldn’t get her to lay hold of my arm o’ nohow.’

“Being the first night we had iver bin together, you munna be surprised when I tell you we didn’t know very well what to talk

about between us, for you see neither of us understood in what way folks in general do manage these things; as my faither and mother niver gied me no sort of advice upon that point, and I shouldn't wonder if hers was just as bad, though I niver axed her the queshton. But we did as well as we could, considering all things: and just for the sake of a little conservation, you know, I told her all about the best way of brewing, as I had heard my faither describe it mony a time; and she, in turn, told me about making butter and cheese, and them things; and she gied me, beside, some good advice how to go on when you've got a cold—bed warmed, and a pinch of brown sugar in th' pan; that was her advice the first night as iver I went after her, and very good it is. Well, while we were walking about, lapped up in this pleasant sort of talk, who should come out all at once, and catch us, but her mother, old Missis Strunts. Ay, dear! what a passion she did but fly into when she clapped her eyes on us! She shouted 'Kitty,' as if she would split herself; and as soon as iver Kitty see'd

her, she pushed me off as if I was rubbage under her nose, and told me to go along with me, and run into the house without saying good night, or aught o' th' sort. But, just as she was going in, her mother fetched her sich a slap on the bare back as I niver heard the fellow to since I was born. As for myself, I thinks it best to get out of the yard as fast as I could, for you see I didn't want nobody to know it was me as followed their Kitty. But, afore I had time to get away, I hears old Missis Strunts bang the house-door to after her, as if she would knock it down. So I guesses from that, there was summut in pickle for Kitty as I should see and hear nothing about. Altogether it had sich a surprising effect on my mind, that, do you know, I durstn't venture to go near the place agen till I had see'd Kitty first somewhere else, to larn how things shaped to us; though it was some time afore I had that great pleasure.

“She didn't often come down to the village afore; but, if you'll believe me, I did raelly think her mother kep' her out of the way on

purpose after that, as she comed down less and less than iver. Howiver, trew luv is a thing that'll make its way where noat else will ; and so it proved in this consarn ; for Kitty was datarmined to see me agen, same as I was her, in spite of onybody or onything. And I have heard them which has said in this very house, that a woman is a divil in these things when once she is set a-going ; and I mun say that seems to me to have some truth in it from what happened after. But I'll tell it to you, and then you may judge for yourself, as I would have ivery body do in other things as well as this."

CHAPTER VII.

A SAD MISTAKE, WITH A STRANGE VISIT OF SAM POGSON'S
TO AN EVENING PARTY.

“ THEN you mun understand, that, for full a three-week after what I have bin telling you, we didn't get so much as a peep of no sort at one another ; and during all that while, as she told me after, Kitty did noat but think on me in the daytime, and dream about me at nights ; sich a strong compression had my bewty, and that tale about brewing, made upon her mind. I don't mean to praise myself you know, but that was just what she told me herself in my own ears.

“ At the end of this three-week, it so happened that old Strunts, Kitty's faither, wanted to brew ; and so he sent down to ar house for a gallon of barm. Kitty natterally knowed all about it ; so what does she do, but goes and

writes me another letter on the sly, and gives it to the man as comed for the barm, telling him to 'liver it up to me in private. It was not him as brought the other, or else we should have bin all right. But what do you think that great fewl—for I can call him noat no better—what do you think he did? Why, blame my skin if he didn't sartinly mistake my faither for me; and there that great thickhead—I have dom'd him for it mony a time up to this day—he raelly called my own faither into the back-yard, and 'livered the letter up to him: though, I do assure you, young man, at that time he was as grey as a badger; and that, one would have thought, was enough, if the fewl had got ony eyes in his head, to let him see he wasn't the man that Kitty was going a-courting to. His name was Samel, the same as mine, you see; and that made him not find it out till he had looked into the inside o' th' letter. As soon as he got hold of it, he pulls it wide oppen, and reads it from top to bottom; but he didn't know what to make on't till he had gone over it twice or three times. When he had brought

his self to understand what it meant, he draws his eyebrows up like a bridge, and comes into the house with a smile all over his face and waistcoat, and he goes straight up to my mother, whew had stood all the while peeping through the corner of that very bar-window into the yard, to see what he and the man were doing in private.

“ When my faither comed into the bar, holding Kitty’s letter straight out in his hand, he says to my mother, ‘ My stars, old missis,’ says he, ‘ here is a pretty job for you to look into.’ ‘ Why, Samel,’ says she, ‘ what ill is in th’ wind now?’ ‘ What ill indeed!’ says he agen, ‘ why noat, missis; only Strunts’s doater Kitty has sent me a valentine in my old age.’ And with that he smiled in sich a queer shape as I niver see’d him do afore. ‘ What do you mean?’ axed my mother; and she turned as red as fire all at once, and snatched the letter out of his hand sooner than he could gie it to her. The very moment that he mentioned Strunts’s doater, it comed into my mind what it was, and I made a push to get it out of my mother’s

hand ; but I was so struck, that o' somehow my senses seemed to go in a minnit, and I dropped on to this hearth as my feet is on now, as dead as a nit. Ay, it's true, as my missis knows ; I was overcome in that manner without ony warning whativer. Well, young chap, when I comed to myself agen, there was my mother and faither propping me up in the arm-chair, and Peggy,—she was ar sarvent at that time, but, like me, she has got married since then, and keeps a bit of a shop down in th' village for all sorts of hucksterings—Peggy, I tell you, was standing by, with a bason of watter in one hand, and the old horn that we hing under the cart to grease the wheels with, in the other ; for, you see, sich folks as us didn't keep a smelling-bottle, and my faither thought the cart-grease would be better than noat at all to put to my nose. So by these helps they brought me round agen. But, Lord ! as I should say so, if you niver was in a fainting fit, young man, I can tell you it is ten thousand times worse than ony body can think on. It seems for all the world as if one wanted to get

alive and couldn't. One feels sich a wish, you know, to come about agen, but can't get. In fact, I raelly think no man can describe it; for it is one of them things that you mun feel if you mean to understand it. I did come about agen, that you are sartin on; and as soon as I oppened my eyes, my mother says to me, 'Well, Sam, how do you feel now?' 'I don't hardly know,' says I; 'I haven't felt yet how I feel, but I fancy I am very queer, very queer. Where have you put that paper?' says I. 'Niver mind that now,' says she; 'it is all a pack of nonsense, Sam, and not worth your notice.' 'Nay,' says I, 'it isn't nonsense neither. I do know better than that at ony rate.' For, you mind, it tickled me up a bit when I heard her call Kitty Strunts's letters nonsense. 'If it is sich nonsense,' says I, 'you needn't be afraid of gieing it to me; so fetch it out, or else I tell you there will be summut happen as you not like.' 'I don't know what you mean by summut happening, Sam,' says she, 'I'm sure.' 'Then I'll tell you what I mean,' says I: 'you know very

well that letter isn't for you nor my faither neither; and so, if you don't mean to fetch it out, and 'liver it up to the right owner, I shall go and make a hole i' th' watter, and drownd myself, and put a end to it that way,' says I. 'Don't talk sich random stuff to me, Sam,' says she, ''cos I not hear it said out of nobody's mouth.' 'Well then,' says I, 'fetch that letter out of your pocket, or else I shall talk sich stuff all day long, and go and do it an' all.' And with that I fetches a great sike, as if I'd heave my heart up. So then my faither turns to her, and says he, 'Give it him, missis, directly, or else you and me not agree long, that I'm sure on.' And with that she fetches it from behind the salt-box, and flings it on to my knee in a bustle, for I could see she was a bit mad about it. I lays hold of it directly, but o' somehow I couldn't for shame to read it afore them, so I rams it into my pocket; and as soon as I could walk, I sneaks off and reads it. I oppened it all in a tremble, to see what she said; and there, do you know, she had begun by calling me dear

Samel. That freshens me like a can of ale ; and I runs over the rest of it as fast as iver my eyes could lick it up. A day or two after, when I had got it all by heart, I stores the letter itself into the bottom of my clothes-box, and claps a piece of brown paper over to keep it out of sight ; for I thought to myself, if they had see'd it once, they shouldn't twice, as nobody had no consarn in it but myself. The contents of it, young man,—though, for sartin, I need not tell you all that rigmarole ; but, in short, the upshot of the letter was here. Kitty, you see,—as her faither was a biggish farmer, and folks took notice of him,—Kitty was to be invited out to a sort of party at Mester Duckworth's, the night after she sent me her letter : and Duckworths, you'll remember, live in ar village at this time, and at the very same house as at that day ; only now it is the son instead o' th' faither, as the old man died about a twel'month ago. But this being the case, that she was invited to make one, and a good un too, at their party, the drift of her letter was, to ax me to come and

fetch her away about half-after nine at night, and take her home, so that we might have some opportunity of talking things over a bit. For I mun say to you, that I wasn't invited myself; which I took to be bad usage, considering I wasn't one of the roughest chaps in the place, and should no doubt have made as good a figure as some of 'em at ony rate. However, that is gone by now, and we will let it rest there. So when I read Kitty's letter, thinks I, if I aren't invited myself, at all events I can go and fetch Kitty away at her own wishes, without seeming as if I wanted to ram my nose into a place where I hadn't bin axed. And with that I writes her a answer back, which I sent agen by Joe Smith, saying, I was flung into a fit by her letter, and that I would take care with all my heart and soul and body to be down at Mester Duckworth's at the time she had set.

“Now you are aware that, as my faither and mother had see'd Kitty's letter, they had naterally a knowledge of all this consarn between her and me that was to come on next

night; and so I cared noat about making no disguise in it, as I had done aforetime.

“ But when the time comed, and I was making ready to be off to Duckworth’s, my mother comed up to me as I stood brushing my shoes at th’ sinkstone; and says she, ‘ Now, Sam, you aren’t going to be so soft as to think of going down there, are you?’ ‘ You may call it soft,’ says I, ‘ if you like; I don’t care: but I can just tell you one thing; you wouldn’t have called it soft, if, instead of me and Kitty Strunts, it had bin my faither going after you, as he did once, if he don’t now.’ ‘ Ay, Sam,’ says she agen, ‘ don’t thee talk o’ thatten; for I’ll let you know there is some difference between you two, and me and your faither.’ ‘ To be sure,’ says I, ‘ I hope there is, for I should be dom’d sorry if there warn’t, and a good deal an’ all.’ ‘ You needn’t think of turning it off that way, Sam,’ says she, ‘ for it’s poor wit as knows no better than that. I can only tell you, you are but a young greenhorn yet, and had a deal better have noat to do with none of ’em. What are you to do with wimin, think

you?’ At that I stops brushing my shoes, and says I, ‘That is very good advice, mother, for them that can take it; and I dar’ to say I might listen to it, if I had experience like yourself: but I haven’t; and you know, as I’ve heard you yourself say mony a time, it’s hard to put old heads upon young shoulders.’ That was a bit of a puzzler for her, and she hardly knowed what to say: but in a bit says she, ‘Yes, yes, Sam; them is different things altogether.’ ‘Are they?’ says I, ‘then I can see no difference in ’em. Where is it?’ says I, ‘becos it must be there if it is there. Crack that nut if you can,’ says I. But she left me then, and said I might take my fling, and then I should have nobody but myself to thank; though all that I didn’t care about, as I was glad to get shut of her onyhow.

“I started down to Duckworth’s about nine o’clock, becos I thought it was better to be a bit too soon than too late, and half-past was the time she had fixed. As it was in the month of March, with a terrible high wind, sich as I don’t remember the like to, for it blowed mony

trees up by th' roots, and cracked ar steeple iver so far down, thinks I, it not be amiss to put my big top-coart on. I does so; but when I got to the door, I seed it was as dark as pitch, with clouds almost on the tree-tops, and some hail and rain beginning to come down. So I turns in again, and laps a good thick sack-bag over my shoulders, becos I knowed looks was noat in sich weather as that. Then I goes into the stable and fetches ar great horn lantern, sich as we use i' th' yard about carts and waggons on winter nights; for I thought it would be just as well to gie Kitty a bit of a light on the road, as the moon that we first courted by was clean gone a good while afore.

“What a night that did but prove surely! We raelly believed the house would have comed over ar heads ivery minnit. This chimby here that we are sitting afore, it roared as loud as ony thunder you iver heard, and the hail comed down it in great stones like peas. My mother set herself in the middle o' th' floor, frightened out of her wits to see sich lightning come

through the shutters ; and two or three times I see'd my faither turn white, though he said noat.

“ In fact, I myself raelly believe, though there's them as might have a different opinion, but I act'ally believe in my own mind, that some of the beasts o' th' field was frightened at it theirselves ;* for it is quite true what I am going to tell you, that, about twelve o'clock at night, when it was at the worst, a jackass positively jumped over the hedge, and comed down out of one of the closes behind here, and stood agen ar house-door as close as he could get, with his teal turned to the storm. Ay, that the poor thing raelly did, for I happened just to oppen the door a bit and see him myself. He was Bill Nadin's ass, as we larnt afterwards, and he stood there till most of it was over ; for I said to my faither, I wouldn't have him disturbed if ony body would have laid me down a five-shilling piece : so much the other way, I should have gied him a can of ale, and pead my faither for it out of my own pocket, if I had knowed he could drink it ; as I don't

doubt, young man, you are aware some of them animals will drink ale when they can get ony body to be so soft as to gie it 'em. But all this that I've bin telling, you mind, was after I had fetched Kitty from Duckworth's, and comed home agen.

“When I had got the lantern lit, and the bag well tied on to my shoulders, I set off without ony more to do, for by that time the clock had got forward a good piece. When I got agen Duckworth's I see'd through the nicks of the shutters that there was a rare light inside, and it made me feel a little mad to think I hadn't bin axed along with Kitty. So I goes up to the door with a datarmination not to be bashful, but to show 'em I thought myself just as good as the best of 'em, even though they hadn't thought fit to invite me : or else, if it hadn't bin for that feeling in my mind, I should hardly ha've knowed how to face so mony fine folks ; for I guessed they would all natterally put their best clothes on. I gives a bold knock at the door, sich as gentlemen does ; and directly up comes a sarvant-wench to open it,

dressed out like my lady, in a fine print gown, and a clean white apron. When she see'd me upon the step, says she, 'What do you want, my man?' 'My *man*!' says I: 'who are you calling my man, do you think? I'll let you know I am as good as you, or your mester either. I have comed for Miss Catherine Strunts; what do you think of that?' said I; and without waiting to be axed, I takes that liberty as I understand gentlemen always does, and walks straight in. 'Scrape your shoes,' says she wi' all the impudence in the world, 'or else see what a passage you'll go and make.' 'I shan't scrape my shoes,' says I, 'at your ordering, nor nobody else's neither. Do you think I don't know what to do wi'out your teaching? My dirt is as good as other folks's dirt ony day; and if you can clean after them that's comed afore, you can clean after me, I should think. Which room are they in?' says I. 'You stand on that mat where you are,' says she, 'and I'll go and ax for her.' 'No, you sharn't,' says I, 'I'll go in myself, for I want none of your offices, missis impudence; as I

guess I'm as good as some of them in there, and a bit better if the truth was known.' So with that I goes up to the door where I thought they were, leaving a great dirt-mark behind me ivery where I set my feet along the passage, just to show that jade I cared noat at all about her. I wouldn't pull my hat off, cos I should only have had the trouble of putting it on agen directly : so I went straight into the parlor, as I reckon it was, with my big coart and the bag on, and lantern in my hand ; to let 'em all see I didn't think myself noat no worse than them. For, when folks has parties and don't think fit to invite me, if I have to go to their houses to fetch ony body away, I like to show 'em they have turned up their noses at birds of as good a feather as their own ; and I do think, on this occasion, I did let 'em understand pritty plainly that I pead 'em no more respect than if they were my own family, for I went in just the same as if I had bin at home.

“As soon as he see'd me coming in, Mr. Duckworth gets up, and comes to me to know who I wanted ; becos, seeing that big lantern in

my hand, and me lapped up as I was for the weather, he natterally thought I had come for somebody. I told him who I had come for, and then says he, ‘ Well, go outside a bit, and she’ll be ready soon ;’ and then he puts his hand to me, as I thought, to push me out and shut the door. That makes me mad in a moment ; so I sets the lantern on the floor, and says I, ‘ No, no, Mester Duckworth, you aren’t going to do that, though it is your own house. Keep your hands off of me. Kitty Strunts told me to come for her at half-past nine, and accordingly here I am ; and here I will be, till she is ready, in spite of all on you in the room put together ; for I’ll let you know there is as good a pair of shoulders under this bag, as under your fine coart :’ and with that I crams myself inside of the room, into a corner where nobody could get at me, and there I defies him. When I looked round, iverybody seemed to be laughing, as I thought, at Mester Duckworth ; for he had gied up the contest like a chicken as he was, and sat his-self down agen. But this proves to you that there is noat like showing a

bit of sperit now and then. I don't mean to say you mun be impudent and forward, nor onything o' th' sort ; but, at proper times, you mind, when folks wants to shove you into the background, or put on you, becos you haven't got your best coart on, it does good then to let 'em see you have a bit of independence in you as cares for nobody if it comes to that. Bless you, after what I have told you, he let me be as quiet as a lamb till Kitty was ready : but that was not long first, for, do you know, she seemed so ashamed, as I fancied, at Mester Duckworth's ill-mannerly usage, that she slipped on her things and got me out of the room as soon as possible.

“Kitty and me should have talked it all over after we got into the street, only, as we had niver see'd one another since that first night I told you about, we had other things to say of more consequence than that. She lays hold of my arm this time, becos of the stormy night, and begins to be very talkative with me, for I believe they had made 'em all have two or three glasses of wine apiece at Duckworth's ;

and though that is but a drop in itself, yet it soon takes hold of a woman, that generally drinks noat no stronger than milk and tea. I don't mean you to understand she was in ony ways elevated above herself, only I fancied it had oiled the hinges of her tongue; that was all. She told me all about how she had gone on since I see'd her afore; and from what I could catch, it seemed as if her mother was a good deal like mine — no friend to the consarn between her and me: but raelly the wind blowed so hard, I lost a deal of what she said, though she would keep talking, whether I heard her or no, till we got up to their house at the Far-leys. After getting there, as we had not said all we wanted to say, we went and stood behind one of the barns to screen ourselves; and there we settled, that, as spring-time was coming on, and she should get out more ivery week, I should see her a deal oftener than I had done.

“ While we were talking, it began to rain and hail harder and harder; so I just see'd her into the house, and then made all the haste I could

to get back agen. That I wasn't long about ; for the wind was behind, and it caught in my big coart and th' bag like a windmill, so I flew along like station. I got home wringing wet ; for, as true as I speak, all down the back of my coart, thick as it were, was as soaked as if it had bin dipped in a pool ; and I don't think I had got into the house more than ten minutes afore that heavy storm comed on which I told you about a bit since."

CHAPTER VIII.

CONTAINS AN ACCOUNT OF THE RIVALSHIP IN WHICH
THE LANDLORD WAS ENGAGED, TOGETHER WITH
OTHER NECESSARY MATTERS.

“THE next time I see’d Kitty, she had a pritty tale to tell me. Afore she spoke, I perceived she was as full as iver she could hold ; so says I to her, ‘ Come, Kitty, I see there is summut amiss, so don’t think of hiding it from me, becos you can’t. I’ve got eyes, remember, as well as other folks ; so don’t try to deceive me, but out with it at once, and let us have no bother.’ Well, with that, young man, tears swum in her eyes, and she looked at me with sich a look, as if she meant to cut my heart into minch-pies. I gies her a good smacking kiss for encouragement to begin with ; but says she, ‘ Nay, Sam, you munna kiss me now.

I don't know what to do. You munna kiss me no more — niver ;' and then she burst 'raight out a-crying. 'Now, Kitty,' says I, for I couldn't bear to see her, 'if you don't tell me directly what's amiss, you'll put my monkey up, and, if you do, you mind there's no knowing what I shall go and do. I sharn't be answerable for myself, so take care what you are about. Tell me this minnit,' says I, and I gied her three or four good uns more ; for I do declare, as I sit upon this settle, I niver see'd a woman look so pritty as she did in that grief. Well, do you know, all my coaxing only made her sob and sike more and more for a bit, till raelly, as true as I have got this glass in my hand, I thought her heart would sartinly have bursted. 'Now, Kitty,' says I to her agen, 'what in the world am I to do wi' you? If you do not speak, I can't make you ; I can't drag the words out of your mouth. Do speak,' says I, 'or else you will, for sartin sure, drive me crazy. You have made me as I hardly know what I'm doing now ; and if you go on in this way much longer, I sharn't have a

bit of senses left in my head.' That seemed to make some compression on her; so she pulled her gown under her and sat down on the bank, for we were in the fields at the time, and says she, 'Do you sit down aside on me.' I did so. 'Well, now, Kitty, my luv,' says I, 'what is it?' She wiped her cheeks, and says she, 'Sam — Sam, — what do you think?' 'Why,' says I, 'Kitty, I think you are very crewel to go on in this way afore me, knowing, as you do, how it cuts me up;' and then I cried a bit out of my own eyes. 'Sam!' says she agen, 'then young Enoch Gregg has comed a-court-
ing to me, and my faither and mother says they'll make me have him, whether I will or no.' 'Is that all?' says I; 'then don't grieve about that, Kitty; for I'm dom'd if you shall have him, so that's settled at once. No, not while I have these legs to stand on, and a head a-top of my shoulders: if you like to stick to me,' says I, 'I'll defend you back and edge; and neither faither, nor mother, nor young Gregg, nor nobody else, shall touch you, or

make you do onything as you don't like. Rest upon me,' says I, 'and you have a good foundation to go on: but as to making all this trouble about it, why I niver knowed sich nonsense in my life. What's Enoch Gregg? — if we have any of his sauce, I'll soon turn him heels upwards, and let him see a little of summut different to what he has always thought of his-self, or else I'll know what sticks on't.' 'Nay, Sam,' says Kitty, 'you munna think of meddling with Enoch, or else that will make it worse and worse.' 'Moant I?' says I agen: 'but if he thinks of cramming his nose in here, and picking you out of my hands in this way, I'll let you know I will meddle wi' him, and in sich a way as he not like an' all; for where is there a bigger result can be offered to ony man, than by a fellow going with his impudence, and trying to shove him altogether out of his sweetheart's arms, just as he seems to be trying to shove me? Dom him, I wish I had him here; I'd larn him how to go a-courting to you agen. How comed he to 'light on you

at first?' says I. 'I see'd him first that night at Duckworth's,' says she. 'Blame that Duckworth's,' says I; 'what one how, and what another, it has bin more mischief to me than a little.'

" 'He set his nasty eyes on me at that party,' says she; 'and so, afore mony days was past, he comes up to ar house wi' all the assurance you can think on, presumptioning, I reckon, on the bit of property his faither is worth; and there he made no more to do but drunk a glass or two of ale with my faither, and then comed all of a blaze to pay his redresses to me as I were making cheese in the dairy. But I told him if he didn't go along with him, I should fling a handful of curds in his face, and so in a bit he let me alone, and went into the parlour agen.' That was what she said. But do you know that poor divel went and told her faither and mother how she said she'd sarve him, and tried to persuade them to interfere about it. And as they knowed no better than he did, they watched their opportunity to get Kitty between 'em; for, you remark, they

wanted her to have young Gregg, as he was expected to come in for some property at a future day.

“They got Kitty between ’em, and there they said they shouldn’t agree for her to choose nobody else but him. They blowed *me* up as if I was stinking fish, and said all they could think on, and scrape together, to set her agen me. They told her for one thing, that I was soft; becos, they said, I always told all I knowed, and hadn’t no discretion what to tell folks, and what to keep to myself: which is as big a lie as man iver laid his tongue to. But, young chap, the thing was here; they didn’t want her to have me, that was it; that was it, you see; and so they didn’t care what they said, true or false, to bend her nose agen me. But, confound sich folks! say I, as I said then to Kitty, though they was her own faither and mother. Confound ’em, and all sich like! for folks as ’ll do that, they wouldn’t hizzitate to do ten times worse, if worse was wanted. Besides, you see, setting me quite on one side, out o’ th’ queshton, the lass didn’t

like young Gregg his-self; for says she to me, when we were talking about him, says she, 'If I wasn't previously fond of your favours, Sam, I should niver like Enoch Gregg; at least, not enough to do any good; for he is too fine for me by a deal. He has lived at Wether-ton, among them town people, till he has got a sort of talk as is a good bit different to arn, and one can't bring one's self all in a minnit to like a porridge that we've niver tasted afore.'

"And then says she, 'I don't always underconstand him, for he uses some words that I niver heard used hereabouts by nobody; and how he has picked 'em up, or where he has got 'em from, I'm sure I don't know.' Now all this only made me more and more resolute that she shouldn't be tormented with him no longer; so I says to her, 'It is of no use talking any more about it, Kitty; don't tell me another word, for I don't want to hear it. If he has that impudence as to come snoozling you agen, so as to be ony pest to you, tell me about it, and I'll settle his hash as sure as he's alive.'

But all her advice to me was, not to be rash about it ; becos, if I should go and get myself hurt in the squabble, she should lay all the blame on her own soft head. Though I told her that wasn't right, as I was very willing to take all the consequences on my own shoulders.

“ Well, young chap, just as I had thought would be the end on't, so it comed about.

“ You understand, I didn't make no secret of my opinions about young Gregg, and his behaviour in this affair. I said just what I thought of him ; and you may be sure, from what you have heard of my ways in other things, that I didn't screwple to make pritty free wi' his character. I made it known all over the parish just as well as if the bellman had done it, for I took good care to let no man go out of this house without carrying along with him as clear a understanding of young Enoch Gregg's rascally behaviour as words could give him. I let 'em all to know he hadn't a bit o' th' gentleman about him, in spite of his riding on horses, and his fine talking, and his white breeches, as if he was th' squire o'

th' lordship instead of what he was. Altogether, you may 'pend on it I painted him in sich colours as folks in general little looked for. This very soon got to his ears from iver so many quarters at once, and he pretends to fly into sich a passion about it as you hardly iver heard of. He dom'd me in about fifty different ways together. He called me no end of nick-names, and said I was a contemptible varment that desarved noat no better than a good horse-whipping for my trouble. He threatened to kick me round th' parish till I couldn't sit on an end; and then he swore he would lay me up in bed for a month, as sure as he had that whip in his hand.

“ When I was told all this, says I, ‘ I laugh at him : I defy him.’ Says I, ‘ I’ll baste him with a child’s rod if he isn’t quiet, and don’t larn how to talk about his betters with more suspect than this :’ and says I, ‘ You may go and tell him ivery word I say, if you like, and let us see what he will do to that.’

“ The same afternoon a sarvent-man, dressed up a deal finer than I was myself, comed to ar

house with a letter. I axed him in and offered him a can of ale, as there isn't mony men but can drink one : but he'd larnt his lesson afore ; so says he, ' Dom your ale, I'll drink no man's ale that has consulted my young mester in the way as you have.' ' Oh,' says I, ' you belong to Greggs, do you ? then, if you not come into th' house, sit down a bit upon that step, while I go in and see what he has to say for his-self.' So I set down and oppened the letter. The contents on't was just in the same style as Gregg his-self talks. *He* thought it was very fine, no doubt ; but I had a different opinion, let who would be right. As nigh as I can charge my memory with it, the words was these,—' Feller ;'—for that was what he begun with ' Feller :—you are a impertinent reptile, and a scoundrel without ony principle at all, or else you wouldn't have made sich a barefaced liar of yourself as you have done in villandifying my character to ivery body. You are a inflammable wretch, that desarves noat no better than a horsewhipping, for you are below anything but that from the hands of a gentle-

man. And if I hadn't a good reason for not babtizing you in that manner, I should niver have took the trouble to waste half a sheet of paper on you. As it is, at the same time that I challenge you, I tell you you are a disgrace to the pistol. But I haven't no other remedy left, and therefore I shall expect you to give me a meeting at once. The laws of honour oblige me to let you choose your own time and weapons, or else you don't deserve it. But I am a gentleman, though you arn't; and for that reason I must abide by them laws, though I have got a dunghill to deal with.'

"That was the letter as nigh as I can remember; and it was signed, Enoch Gregg. When I had read it, I went to the man at the door, and my answer was this.' Says I, 'Tell your mester, for what he has here said in this letter, I shall gie him a dom'd good threshing.' And then I shut the door in his face.

'But, he oppened it agen, and told me I must send my answer in writing. 'No,' says I; 'I sharn't do onything o' th' sort; word of mouth is plenty good enough for

him, and almost too good. If I could send it him in any more contemptible way, I would.'

" 'You're a ignorant feller,' says he, 'and below my mester's notice; only sich curs mustn't be allowed to bark at good men.' 'Dom your een,' says I, 'if you don't keep that tongue of yourn civil, I'll thresh you an' all, and then you can go home and tell your mester how you like it, and send him for a bit o' th' same.' That makes him draw in his horns; so says he, 'When do you mean to meet him then?' 'Why,' says I, 'wheniver he likes, and wheriver he likes; it is no matter to me. I can thresh him any time where he likes best to have it done. I'll do it afore his own window if he thinks fit, either to-night or to-morrow morning; but I advise him to say to-morrow, or else I shall spoil his night's sleep for him, that you may rest satisfied about. Tell him to gie his-self no trouble about it, for I shall have a bit of time to spare to-morrow morning afore I set to work. I'll get up half-an-hour sooner on purpose; and then, if he likes to come down to Duckworth's

close, about six o'clock, I'll gie him quite as much as he can do wi', and perhaps a bit more for luck. And you may come with him if you like, for I dar' say I shall have plenty for you boarth.' All that made him very mad; so says he, 'you poor boastful coward, Pogson, you know you durstn't do noat that you've bin talking about. We shall make you sing another tune to-morrow. If my mester doesn't bang your hide till you go down on your knees and ax his pardon, I'm woefully mistaen. He'll show you what all your bragging comes to; so don't come without being prepared to get a bullet in your belly.' 'Ay,' says I, 'I shall take good care to put a bullet there myself afore I go, for I mean to have my breakfast first.'

"And in a bit after that had passed between us, he started.

"This consarn soon got wind all over the place, and it even went so far as Strunts's within an hour or two. The way I got to know that was this-how. About seven o'clock, or half-past it might be, when it was getting

into the dusk o' th' evening, there comes a rap at ar back-door. I was sitting in this kitchen, and was the first that heard it. Thinks I, 'Who can that be? They must be strange fewls to think of rapping at the door of a public-house. Why don't they oppen it and come in?' But I wouldn't get off of my chair, becos I said to myself, if they didn't know no better than that, it was best to larn 'em by letting 'em stop there till they was tired, and oppened it theirselves. In a bit, they rapped agen. So I shouts, 'Oppen th' door and come in, you stupid soft, and don't stand knocking there as if you was at a gentleman's house!' But for all that they wouldn't come in; and, in about two or three minnits more, they rapped a third time. 'Well,' says I, 'it seems, if you are to come in, I mun lift up the latch for you, and perhaps walk your legs an' all.' So I gets up to go to the door; and blame me if it wasn't Kitty Strunts. As soon as I clapped eyes on her, I flew into sich a rage wi' myself for that behaviour of mine, that I felt just as if I could knock three or four of my own teeth down my

throat. I took up a walking-stick, and says to her, 'Here, Kitty; lay hold of this, and fetch me a great whollop on this soft head of mine, for letting you stand at the door sich a while.' 'Nay, Sam,' says she, with a sweet smile; 'I am comed to try if I canna hinder you getting hurt, instead of hurting you. Do let me persuade you not to go nigh that Enoch Gregg; for I have heard he swears he'll mudder you.' I laughed at that, and says I, 'Come in, Kitty, and sit down a bit, for you sharn't go back till you have had your supper; so don't try to make ony excuses.' She was bashful at coming in for the first time, as was natteral. But at last I persuaded her; and she looked down so modest, that raelly I couldn't help gieing her a kiss as she comed through th' door. When she was got in, I took her into the bar, and says I 'Now, Kitty, you aren't so downright soft as to believe a quarter of what Gregg says, surely?' 'But he says he means shooting you, and I am afraid of him,' says she; 'do let me prevail on you niver to go within reach of him.'

You see,' says she, 'I have comed down all in my dirt; I have but just flung this old shawl over my shoulders to hide my dirty gown, for I haven't had time to clean me up.' 'Well,' says I, 'you are very good to be sure; but don't be afraid, for he'll none shoot me. It is only his nonsense, I'm sure.' 'He is as earnest as iver man was in this world,' says she, 'and I know he is very datarmed when he's once set on a thing. He'll be sartin to hit you; and if he does, Sam, what will become of me?' 'Well,' says I, 'you be quiet, Kitty; but if them's his laws of honour as he calls 'em, dom 'em for me. I'd sooner have my meanness than sich honour as that. But you mind this, Kitty; he says in his own letter as I have the choice o' th' weapons, therefore he'll not go so far as to take a gun if I don't; and God knows, I mean noat of that kind; so make yourself easy, for I shall only gie him a bit of a drubbing, sich as will do him good for the time to come. And if he can do the same by me, why all well and good: but I aren't afraid of him, nor no

sich half-bred cockrel as he is.' That was as cooling to her as camomile-tea; so she sat quiet about five minnits, and then she wanted to be off; but I wouldn't let her go on no account, till she had het a bit of bread and cheese, and drunk a drop of ale. I showed her to my faither and mother; and though I could see they didn't like it, yet you know they were forced to behave summut like decent to her for sake of good manners. After that, I put on my other coart, for I always wear an old rip i' th' house; and I took Kitty home agen. On the road, her and me had a good deal of talk about this same matter, which we couldn't have had afore company. But I needn't run that gammon over, becos it comed to noat no more than you have heard the like to afore."

CHAPTER IX.

ONE OF THE BEST DUELS RECORDED IN HISTORY, TOGETHER WITH AN ACCOUNT OF THE FINAL CONSUMMATION OF POGSON'S WISHES.

“NEXT morning I was up by five. I milked the cow,—as we keep only one for our own consumption,—and took a basin of milk and half a quartern loaf to it for my breakfast. I left my faither just getting up, and went off to Duckworth's close, as I had promised, in very good time. When I got there, there was none of Enoch Gregg nor nobody else comed. So what does I do, as it was early in spring, but amuse myself by looking round the close for birds' nests, till they should make their appearance. I had fun a magpie's, and was getting up into a big ash-tree to take it, when, from my height, I spied Gregg and another

smart-looking feller coming down the road. I leaves the nest, slips down the tree agen, and spits into my hands to get 'em ready. When them two comed up, I see'd this other feller had brought two swords, and a pair of pistols almost as long as from my elbow. 'What have you got these for?' says I to him; 'are you going to mow, and shoot rooks, this morning?' 'Just which you like,' says he agen: 'which do you choose?' 'Why,' says I, 'I aren't going to do neither.' Upon that, Gregg puts in: 'Come, come,' says he, 'let us have none of your nonsense now we have got you here; becos, by George, I not stand it. Pick your weapon up, you dom'd unprincipled reptil.' 'Don't fly into snick-snarls,' says I; 'do you mean fighting with *them*?' 'What else, you stupid dunghill,' says he, 'do you think I mean?' 'Why, little Gregg,' says I, 'don't go into sich a passion; you can do noat, now you know you can't.' 'Blisters and smoke!' says he, for them was his words, 'can't I?' and with that he snatches hold of a pistol, and was going to pull the trigger at me, in a divel of a

rage, only that other chap see'd what he was going to do, and knocks it out of his hand. 'Consarn it, Gregg!' says he, 'what are you doing? You mustn't do so, or it'll be mud-dur.' I then goes up to him myself, crams my nose into his face, and says I, 'Now, Gregg, you poor fewl you, didn't you tell me in your own dom'd letter that I had choice o' th' weapons?' 'Then,' says he, 'why don't you take one or t'other, like a man?' Says I, 'If I have the choice, I can please myself whether I take either or neither, or summut else of my own providing; can't I, eh?' 'Take your own providing,' says he, 'and the divel a-top of you.' 'I will,' says I; and with that I goes up to the hedge-side, and picks up two flails that I had brought with me. 'Here,' says I, 'these is my choice; take which you like.' 'What do you mean?' says boarth of 'em together. 'Dom it,' says I, 'surely you haven't lived in the country all these years, and don't know what a flail means at last of all. Didn't I send you word yesterday, that I meant to thresh you this morning if you comed to have it?'

And that made boarth of 'em laugh, mad as they was. Somehow I canna help thinking to this day, that young Gregg was glad of ony excuse to creep out of it, though he had boasted so much, or else he wouldn't have said what he did; and particularly when he see'd what sort of weapons I meant to use; for you mind I was a deal the best man, boarth at the flail and in size and strength. So he pretended to laugh it off; and says he, 'Well, Pogson, you are a queer feller; I hardly know what to make of you. Perhaps you didn't mean onything particular in what you said about me?' 'Well,' says I, 'you shall have it just as you like, and then, perhaps, you can satisfy yourself. Only you mind this, Gregg,' says I, 'if this thing is to go off in this way, it's on condition as you don't bother Kitty Strunts no more; remember that.' 'Be hanged to Kitty Strunts!' says he; 'what do I care about sich common stuff as her? I can pick as good as her up in ivery street in Wetherton.' 'Oh, very well,' says I, then you may go and pick the streets clean; only keep your hands off of her, that's all I

care about.' 'Why you don't think I iver meant to marry her, do you?' says he. 'If you iver did,' says I, 'all the bigger fewl you for your trouble, becos she wouldn't have you at no price; and if she would, I'd take blest good care that you shouldn't have her.' '*You'd* take care,' says he; 'what would *you* do? If I thought her worth picking up, I'd have her in spite of you or a thousand sich; you dirty varment, you. I feel as if I should like to have a rap at you now,' says he. 'Do it,' says I; 'do it, as soon as you like. But you durstn't, Gregg, you know you durstn't, though you have broat a feller along with you to help you. I'll take you boarth, one down and t'other come on, if you like. You talk about liking to have a rap at me! Why, if you aren't civil, I'll take you by the nape o' th' neck and chuck you o'er the hedge into th' next field, you poor bantam.' That put him into sich a passion, he couldn't bear his-self no longer; so he snatched up one of the flails, and, afore I could defend myself, he fetched me sich a wipe aside of the head, it almost stunnied me,

and tore the brims of my hat clean off all round; so I looked more as if I had got a tin pan on my head, than anything else.

“I tried to get hold of t’other flail, but he had made me so dizzy that, with stooping a bit, I tumbled down forwards. Seeing me down, he comes, like a coward as he was,—and t’other chap stood close by all the while, taking no notice,—Gregg comes at me agen to gie me another rap as I lay on th’ floor; but, somehow, he didn’t know how to use the flail, for when he made an aim at me with all his strength, the top of it swung round and fetched him a divel of a sallet on his own head. That made him as mad as a bull; so he gives his-self no time, but aims agen, and fetches his head another of the same sort, but a deal worse. That fell atop of his crown, and beat his hat clean down over his face, so that he could see no more than a mole.

“T’other chap burst out a-laughing, and tried to pull it up for him, but it wouldn’t come; for, you see, Gregg’s nose-end was doubled down by it, and when he tried to yerk his hat up, it

went so stiff that it would sooner have pulled his nose up by the roots than have comed off.

“When I see’d that, and knowed what blows he had gied his-self, thinks I, Old chap, you’ve got enough without me giving you ony more ; so I took the flail out of his hand, and picked t’other off o’ th’ floor, and says I, ‘Good morn-ing, Gregg, and I wish you a pleasant walk home agen :’ and then I fetched him a slap under the coart-laps with the broad of my hand for a finisher, and left ’em to it, to manage as well as they could.

“T’other chap called to me to help him to get Gregg’s hat off ; but, says I, ‘No, I’m blamed if I do ; he put it on his-self, and there it may stop till Christmas afore I’ll touch it ;’ and then I got over the gate and went home ; and that was what some folks call a dewel, that we fought with flails about Kitty Strunts.

“Howiver, to be short, the end of it all was this, that young Gregg took good care niver to meddle with Kitty no more : only he had the meanness, when he met her once or twice afterward, to throw out some of his impudent con-

sults to her, just as these country chaps will do to ony wench that happens to go by. But I told her the wisest way was to care noat at all about what he said, for he was unworthy to have even her contemptible nose turned up at him.

“ When her faither and mother got to know all about this consarn, and larnt how I had beat young Gregg clear off o’ th’ walk after their Kitty, they turned quite savage about it, and took agen me more and more. The old woman, Missis Strunts, discharged Kitty from iver harbouring me about their premises agen; but Kitty very plainly told her, if it was come to that, she defied her: for says she to her mother, says she, ‘ If you gie me a discharge from speaking to Sam Pogson ivery morning, I shall be at him agen at night; so you might as well save your breath for better uses.’ Sich, young man, was her constancy to me afore we had tied the parson’s knot; and, on my part, I took care not to be behind her, for I said to my faither and mother one day as they were boarth sitting together in the bar, said I, ‘ I’ll tell you what,

once for all ; if you mean, boarth on you, to go on with this sort of opposition to my natteral confections for Kitty Strunts, and to set up your backs agen ar unity in lawful padlock, I'm dom'd if I don't fly in your faces ; and I'll be a bachelor all my life out of spite to you, that I will, and th' breed shall die, — even if you bring the squire's doater and set her down afore me, with half o' th' parish for her portion. So don't denude yourselves,' says I, 'with ony notion of *saving* me for somebody else, becos I don't exactly think I'm a thing to be gied away in that manner.'

“ I think, young man, I have said afore, there is noat like showing folks you have got a bit of sperit now and then. That was clearly proved in this case, for when boarth ar faithers and mothers got convinced that there was no sich thing as parting us, they comed over a bit, and seemed as if they had no inclination to meddle a great deal more in the matter. But, for all that, old Strunts wouldn't look at me for a long while, becos he felt uncommon sore to think how I had drove young Gregg off of

Kitty : but what did I care for that ? *She* encouraged me to go to her, and that was enough ; as it always is, for blame onybody else, when a wench herself whistles to one. That is my notion of things of this sort. Well, so it was ; and we courted and courted, and got very fond indeed of one another afore the summer was out. Then says I to Kitty one day at dark-hour, as we were walking together up Otter Lane, says I, ‘ Now, Kitty, you and me has bin going this kind of rig a good long while ; and long enough, I should think, to know whether we raelly are fond of one another or not, as much as them things can be known beforehand ; so I should like to ax you just one queshton : it is a plain, simple queshton, you mind ; and I should like a plain, straight-forward answer to it. There wants no ceremony with me,’ says I, ‘ that you know very well. Tell me at once, without any soft bother, are you ready ?’

“ And with that, I cast sich a`eye in her face as she was little used to see come out of my head. I looked the Lord’s prayer at her.

She stared like a codfish at me a quarter of a minnit, and then blushed into a red-hot cinder. ‘Speak,’ says I, and I chirped her under the chin. ‘Sam,’ says she, ‘I don’t know how to speak; but you know you have no occasions to ax me onythink o’ th’ sort: if I’m onybody’s, I am yours.’ ‘That’s right, Kitty,’ says I; ‘you are vittles and lodgings to me. That’s enough, my luv; and now we will get ready to be married.’

“The next morning I goes up with all formalities to their house, and axed Mester and Missis Strunts if they would gie their resent to the match: it was her mother that I see’d first; and do you know, for all I had gone on sich a errand as that, she niver axed me to drink a single glass of ale; no, that she didn’t, and I shouldn’t have had one if Kitty hadn’t seen it and brought one out without saying a word. When I had mentioned the matter to Missis Strunts, and we had had a good deal of talk about it, she says at last, ‘I’ll tell you what, Mester Pogson, I have not got noat to say agen you as a man; there is a deal worse than you,

no doubt: but you knowed very well, mony months ago, that, from first to last, I niver gave my countenance to your redresses to ar Kitty; they niver met my approbation, nor my mester's neither; and, as I have done all along, I shall set my face completely agen it.' 'Very well, Missis Strunts,' says I, 'do as you like, for I do asure you I sharn't try to make no persuasions: I aren't going to go a-begging for her when I can have her without, for she is quite willing; so that is done with at once.' Just as I had said that, old Mester Strunts comed in, and I put the same queshton to him as I had done to Missis. His first word was, 'Mester Pogson, what does my missis say about it?' 'What!' says I: 'do you go and call yourself a man, and want to know what your missis says afore you durst gie your own opinion? Now, Strunts,' says I, 'don't lead yourself by the nose in that manner, nor pin yourself upon no woman's sleeve: if you have got a judgment of your own, show it like a man, and go your own road without axing for ony woman's stepping-stones. It is your own private senti-

ments, if you have got any, that I want, and not your missis's. Dom it,' says I, 'I have heard enough of her opinions already, and too much by half. Speak for yourself, Strunts, if you have got a tongue of your own; but if you haven't, why I'll excuse you, and missis mun speak for you: only I tell you beforehand, it will be better for you to gie your resent to the match peaceably, becos, if you don't, you'll only make worse on't; so just consider within yourself if it not be better to make us a nest at home at once, than to let us go like some of these hens of yours, and lay away in th' hedge-bottoms and stack-yards, as we sartinly shall do if you don't resent to these proposals.' That was the substance of what I said to him; but for all that I couldn't get noat inclusive out of him.

"All that he could say was, he didn't know what to say to it, and he hardly knowed what could be said, and sich like shuffling: so at last I oppened the door to go out, and says I, 'Strunts, I'll just tell you this afore I go out of your house,—you are a poor mortal,

a poor henpecked feller, and you haven't got a bit of a man about you ; but I'll prove to you afore to-morrow night, that I don't care th' turn of a pin for sich a thing as you.' And then I walked out, and banged the door to after me, as if I was going out of a stable ; and from there I went straight to Parson Wild's. I needn't tell you what I went there for ; that you can guess pritty well yourself : but after I had done there, and gone home, I took my first opportunity of telling ar folks what I meant to do. Says I, ' Mother, you mun get a room clean whitewashed and brushed up afore next week, for I am going to be married, and I shall bring her home.' Says I, ' Her and me can look after the public-house better than you, for you are getting oldish and good for noat ; and to tell you the truth, though I don't mean onything disrespectful, but I do say, that you and my faither isn't a bit better than lumber about th' house now ; and so you had as well retire out o' th' business at once, and leave it to me and Kitty ; only you mind this,' says I, ' I don't wish to cut you boarth off of work

all on a sudden,—*you* can get up first in a morning, and sweep the floor and wesh the pots as usual; and my faither can do all the brewing and dirty work as long as he likes; but me and Kitty, we will see after iverything else, for ar legs is younger than yours.’ And that was the way I reconciled them to the alteration.

“When old Strunts and his missis see’d what it was we meant, they tried to persuade Kitty to go out of town to see an uncle of hers that lives here, five-and-twenty mile at least t’other side Wetherton; but she was too sharp for ’em, and wouldn’t go: she smelt that they only wanted to get her out of my road, and so put a stop to th’ consarn that way if they could; but old birds isn’t catched with chaff. I told Kitty we had better do it at once, and so put it out of their power, becos till one has made safe there is no trusting nobody: she entertained similar thoughts, and so, one morning in the beginning of the next week, we got married all of a jerk, and nobody hardly knowed on’t half an hour afore it was done. I took

Kitty home, and we have lived here iver since.

“ But my faither and mother, boarth of ’em, is now dead out o’ th’ road, God rest ’em ! and Kitty’s have got a bit more reconciled to us than they used to be. They come down sometimes of a Sunday, and get their dinners wi’ us and off agen ; but we aren’t the thickest friends on neither sides for all that. We look for ’em down here next Sunday, as they mostly come about ivery three or four weeks, and it is nigh on that time since they were here last. But I’ll tell you what ; I have made a datarmination in my own mind to keep ’em supper over when they come agen, and try to make old Strunts drunk if I can, for I know he likes a sup of good ale, and then may-happen we shall get a bit thicker, as there is noat in this world like a sup of good ale for making folks friendly agen after they have fell out.”

CHAPTER X.

IN WHICH OUR HERO BILBERRY AGAIN APPEARS UPON
THE STAGE, BUT IS DRIVEN OFF BY A FORMIDABLE
DISTURBANCE ON A MOST TRIVIAL OCCASION.

THE landlord having, at length, brought his relation to a close, and thus set Mr. Thurland free to retire to rest as soon as he should think proper, our young adventurer asked for a light for that purpose, and was about to bid Mr. and Mrs. Pogson a very good night, when he suddenly bethought himself that, as he should require to be upon his journey very early in the morning, and perhaps before his host or hostess should have arisen, he had better discharge overnight the score chalked up against him, and so prevent all trouble and unnecessary delay on the morrow. With this

suggestion the landlord was by no means backward to comply, for, without casting any reflections on the high respectability of Mr. Bilberry Thurland, we must yet be permitted to say that his dress and appearance were not exactly of a kind to inspire shallow and ignorant people with much confidence in the resources of his pockets ; and therefore his host, without a moment's hesitation, retired to the bar with his wife, for the purpose of drawing up his account. After the lapse of about half an hour he returned, and laid before Mr. Thurland the following very curious bill, written with an ink which had so often been indulged with sups of small-beer as at this time to be scarcely distinguishable from that fluid in a state of purity.

Boat off Samel Pugsin.

Good enterteanment for man and beast.

	£.	s.	d.
To on can of ale	0	0	1½
To ditto	0	0	1½
To the sam	0	0	1½
To likewise	0	0	1½

To 1 super on ar cock	0	0	9
Melted butter and parsly gid in	0	0	0
Bred to sam	0	0	1
Cheaze after	0	0	1
Fore cans ail, sinse	0	0	6
To 1 bed, logging	0	0	3

Grand Tottle 0 2 2

Settld sam day

Samil Pegsun.

Mr. Thurland took up his account, and, having first laughed heartily at the odd variations which his host had played upon his own name, he examined every item separately; but much questioned the accuracy of the number of cans of ale set down, as he had no recollection of having drunk anything like the quantity thereby implied. Mr. "Pegsun" assured him it was quite right, because he could trust to his missis in things of that sort better than to anybody else in the world; and added, that if his guest was not perfectly satisfied, he might go into the bar and see every one of them set on behind the door as they were drawn. But, very honourably, Bilberry gave way without appealing for satisfaction to the unanswerable

evidence here offered ; especially as the landlord assured him it was quite impossible for one chalk to have been added to the score, unless a can of ale positively went along with it. Accordingly, Mr. Thurland put his hand in his pocket, and drawing out the wages he had received from the executors of his old master, Zachary Blunt, paid his host two shillings ; for the oddment being but two-pence, “ Mr. Pugin ” told him they would say nothing about it.

This business being settled, the landlady summoned Bessy, that sweet and useful damsel, to light Mr. Thurland to his chamber. It so happened that Bilberry had not before had a convenient opportunity for examining and saying a few words to this rank and untutored, but nevertheless lovely creature ; the present favourable one, therefore, he determined not to lose ; for when she presented herself before him, with a candle in her hand, which threw an agreeable light upwards on to her plump and healthy features, he really thought her possessed of so great a degree of vulgar beauty, that his soul was suddenly inspired with emo-

tions of great kindness towards her, and in the secret recesses of his heart he instantly resolved to have a little pleasant discourse with her as they went up stairs together. In other words, Bilberry had listened to Mr. Pogson's last story concerning courtship not without profit; and prudently thinking that the advice of experienced men is all the better for being taken early, he thus began, within an hour after he had received it, to bring it into operation upon his landlord's own damsel, Miss Bessy. However, it must be very evident to the sensible reader, that the period required for walking from the ground-floor to the door of a room on the second story, is itself scarcely sufficient in which to commence and bring to a happy conclusion so important an affair as that of courtship.

To lengthen the opportunity, Mr. Thurland sent Bessy down stairs to fetch the warming-pan, being fully determined to have his bed warmed, notwithstanding that it was now the middle of July, and so hot that he was obliged to keep his chamber-window open all night

Without the help of a long description, it may readily be conceived that Mr. and Mrs. Pogson were greatly astonished when they ascertained the object of Bessy's errand; but more especially was the former of the two, Mr. Samuel Pogson, thunderstruck at this strange whim of his guest. He lifted up both his hands, and spreading out the fingers of each like a bunch of radishes, exclaimed in amazement, "Lord, missis, what can he mean? Bed warmed, does she say? Raelly I don't understand it!" Then thrusting both his hands into the waistband of his breeches, for he had thrown off his coat long ago, he very seriously turned to Mrs. P. with this solemn request; "Missis," said he, "do, if you please, just go up, at my wishes, yourself, and see what it is he wants: Bessy mun have misunderstood him. He meant he was *very warm*, instead of having his bed warmed; but if he sticks to it, do ax him if he isn't off of his head." And then he mixed himself another glass of gin and water, to strengthen his soul in its extremity.

Before the landlady attempted to proceed up stairs, Miss Bessy, who, on her part, had conceived, if possible, a stronger desire to have a little discourse with Bilberry, than that young gentleman himself entertained with respect to her, began to feel fearful lest the opportunity for it should be lost through the officiousness of her master, and therefore she immediately explained that it was quite impossible she could be mistaken in what the young gentleman said ; “ Only,” she observed, with sole reference to “ Samil Pegsun,” that “ some people, who was half-a-mile out of the way, always know a deal better what is said, and what isn’t, than them that had their ears close to his mouth :” and calculating upon the strength of this excellent observation, she forthwith reached down the warming-pan with a bang, and poking half the kitchen fire into it, at a rate which buried Mr. Pogson in white dust, carried the whole very triumphantly up stairs, before her master had time to set down his glass and look about him. And well indeed it was that, by this suddenly executed manœuvre, the maid Bessy at once

achieved her object: for Mr. P. was a man who laid great stress upon his own opinion in all points of importance like the present; and rather than have been overborne by his own servant, would even have thought it worth his while to proceed to violence with her, and maintain his point by wrenching the warming-pan out of her grasp, and taking it into his own possession. Happily, this extremity was prevented by the girl's dexterity, while the landlord himself had no resource left but that of falling to the abuse of her, something in the following strain: only, for the sake of our Christian readers, whose ears Mr. Pogson has already perhaps sufficiently tried, we have omitted various ill epithets and vile names, which, throughout this heroical philippic, he very abundantly applied to the offending Bessy. "I'll tell you what, missis," said he, laying his pipe down upon the tap-board with such violence that it broke into three several pieces, "that wench of yourn gets past all bearing: she'll be my mester next, I reckon, if

I'll let her. Here, you see what she's done now, though I said what I did ; smothered me up i' dust and ashes, and gone off up stairs wi'out caring a jot for what I say : raelly it puts me in sich a passion, I — I — I — I hardly know what to say. I could break her head for her, a impudent gipsy ! Dom me if I'll keep her another week, that I not ; no, not if I have to do all th' mopping and dish-washing myself. I not be consulted time after time i' this way by her, nor nobody like her ; and if you can't get another wench as knows her place a little better than this jade, we'll have none at all, and you may do all the work as well as you can ; for, I do assure you, if *she* stays in this house, I'll go out on't ; that's all. I see we shall niver hit it as long as we live. She likes to have her own way, and I'm datarmined to have mine, and so we shall do no good together, if we live forty year. What wages do we owe her ?" And here the landlord paused, while Mrs. Pogson replied that she could not tell exactly, without reckoning it up.

“Then cast it up,” observed the indignant husband; “cast it up, and pay her when she comes down stairs, for I am datarmed she shall go out of this house to-morrow. I’ve threatened her mony a time before; but threatening seems to be of no use, and now I’ll do it. I’ll let her see who’s going to be mester, if it comes to that; and we’ll do as well as we can till we get another. Here’s Missis Gamson’s doater, as nice a wench as man iver clapped eyes on, she’d jump to come into th’ place, or I’m sadly mistaen; and I’d be willing to lose summut by th’ change, for I know it’ll be no loss i’ th’ long-run. But, loss or no loss, that dom’d Bess sharn’t sleep under this roof above to-night, that is sartin; so you needn’t make no words about it, cos I not have her.”

Mrs. P. well knew it would be of little avail to make any words, or to attempt to offer an apology for her maid, while Mr. P. continued under his present excitement; so that she made no other reply than one to the pur-

port that it would be better to let Bessy's wages alone until the morning, because that could be settled quite as well, and perhaps better then than now. To which the landlord returned with additional fire, "What! you — you — you want to encourage her, do you? I see what you mean, you want her to stop a bit longer: only just go on that way a bit, and she'll soon show her airs ten times worse than iver. I'm admonished at you, missis, to think as you should know no better. Get out wi' it, I say. I'd be ashamed of it, if I couldn't say noat no better than that. Do you do as I tell you, and cast her wages up, and gie it to her afore she goes to bed, and let her sleep upon that if she can. I am mester, and mester I will be: howiver, when I arn't, I'll gie ony body leave to eat me. But I not pay no wenches two guineas a year, and their vittles, to come and domineer o'er me upon my own floor. No; I'll see 'em all dom'd afore I will: and then you to go and back 'em in 't, an' all!"

Mrs. Pogson felt her mettle rising at this undeserved reflection upon her conduct, and, with some warmth, was about to repel the charge of encouraging her maids in their impudence, when the landlord interrupted her, and would not allow her to proceed. "Don't say noat about it," said he; "don't say noat about it. You'd best let it alone, I tell you; for you can say noat to mend it, I'm sure. Pey her her wages ivery ha'penny, and let her go i' th' morning, for I not put up with her insolence any longer."

Mrs. P., seeing no resource left for evading a regular disturbance but to comply at once with her husband's drunken commands, flew off in a huff, and, unlocking a drawer under the tap-board, took out a greasy memorandum-book without a cover, and sat down in a temper not exactly fitted for correct calculation, to reckon up the number of weeks since Bessy last received her wages; while the landlord again placed himself in the chimney corner, to settle the remainder of his passion through



Drawn and Engraved by A. H. H. H.

SENTIMENTAL CONVERSATION.

the quieting influence of a peaceable clean pipe.

During the time that the host and his estimable lady were thus stirring a slight dust below stairs, Mr. Thurland and Miss Bessy, on the second story, employed themselves in a transaction exactly the contrary of that just related. While the noise of strife increased beneath them, they did all in their power to keep the balance level by growing gradually warmer, and, at last, even somewhat furious, in their declarations of mutual attachment. Bessy had set down the pan in the passage, and leaned her back against the wall, in order that, at her ease, she might listen to the pretty discourse which Bilberry poured into her ear; while Bilberry himself, in place of preparing for his rest, found it more agreeable to stand alongside Bessy, and explain to her various of those exquisite charms of her person which hitherto had escaped her own observation.

Now, lest the bashful reader should wonder

how it came about that Bessy took so sudden a liking to Mr. Thurland, who was in fact such a perfect stranger to her, it may be as well to observe, that Bilberry possessed by nature a person such as almost any maiden would esteem a very desirable companion beside her own, which, to say nothing of deeper causes, is a sufficient reason why Miss Bessy fastened upon him so suddenly, and with such determination. In fact, as she herself very soon gave him to understand, she had, several times during the evening, set desiring eyes upon him through the nick of the door, and marked him out, if possible, for her own. On the discovery of this truth, we must do this innocent young gentleman the credit to affirm that he felt half terrified at the thoughts of what might eventually be the consequences; but soon he plucked up his spirits, and, along with them, the courage to make a proposal to Bessy, the particulars of which will have to come forward by and by. At this moment we can say no more than that, much as Bessy loved him, she would not all at once agree to it, but took time till the

next morning to consider whether she should give her consent or not: but more especially did she refuse to close an agreement now, as she had stayed up stairs already much longer than the ostensible business upon which she went would warrant; though, fortunately for her, the disturbance she had previously set a-going between Mr. and Mrs. P. down stairs, prevented either of those worthy people remarking her delay, or else it is more than probable that the latter-named of the pair might, in homely phrase, have fetched her down with a rattle. For, to tell the truth, Mrs. Pogson was naturally extremely jealous of any damsel within her jurisdiction amusing herself by a little innocent conversation with people of an opposite gender; in so far, indeed, that, as Bessy herself informed Mr. Thurland, she had already turned adrift at a minute's notice no less than three several servant-wenches for having, as she believed, fallen in love with her own husband, the redoubtable Samuel. How far these acts were justifiable, we who are but hearers shall not attempt to determine; though

judging simply from the account which Mr. Pogson gave of himself in the early part of the story of his courtship, we should feel tempted to pronounce it most probable that Mrs. P. would have done an act of greater justice, had she, instead of turning away the wenches, for all three offences discharged "Samil Pegsun" himself.

Besides the conversation between Bessy and Bilberry, above alluded to, these young people had taken ample advantage of the chance afforded them for exchanging several other more sensible proofs than mere words, of their new affection: these, of course, good reader, consisted of several very exquisite kisses. No sooner, however, had commenced the period of silence below stairs, which followed the landlady's compliance with her husband's request, than these tokens of affection were obliged to cease, lest the sound should awaken the jealous ears of Mrs. P. The young couple, in conclusion, took a silent and lingering adieu, and then Miss Bessy snatched up the warming-pan,

purposely drove it against the door-post of Bilberry's room, slapped the door to, banged the walls of the passage with an air of expedition as she went along, and finally scampered down two stairs at a stride, by way of peroration.

CHAPTER XI.

BILBERRY RE-COMMENCES HIS TRAVELS.

No sooner had this damsel departed, than young Thurland got into bed; having, however, first taken the precaution to roll up his breeches like a football, and place them beneath his pillow, lest, during the time he slept, some person or other should enter the room by accident, and, mistaking them for his own, abstract from the pockets that small remnant of wages which now, unhappily, was all the treasure he possessed in the world.

Notwithstanding that the hour was late, and that Bilberry had taken a very considerable quantity of drink,—both of which, it is well known, are eminent disposers to sleep,—yet he could not keep his eyes closed, or obtain a

moment's rest, so active were his thoughts concerning his new female friend, Miss Bessy. In vain did he roll over from one side to the other, and back again, so repeatedly that, at last, the indignant and insulted bed-clothes began to forsake him, and betake themselves to the floor. In vain did he declare he would think no more about her until the next morning, and then forcibly shut his eyes, and insist on going to sleep whether he could or not. All this only increased his great heat of body into a high fever of irritation, until, when he had tossed about like a cork in a gutter during the space of an hour, he at last bounced out of bed in a rage, and took several cooling turns up and down on the bare plaster floor.

When Bilberry had fairly starved his toes into icicles, he turned into bed again; and, shortly after, was so highly favoured as to obtain a few odds and ends of that great and universally esteemed blessing, sleep.

Morning had hardly broke; the sky was yet of a dark grey, as though night had scarcely turned; and the dew hung like a white rime on

the otherwise invisible spider threads, spun from branch to branch of the trees outside his window, when, in great restlessness, he opened his eyes. Something had disturbed him, but he knew not what, nor whether the cause was an internal or an external one. By and by, he was startled to hear a smothered, but very earnest rapping at his door. He raised himself on his elbow, and pulled his ears from under his night-cap, the better to assure his senses: the rapping was repeated, in a manner which convinced him it could not be accidental. He thrust his head over the side board, and in an under-tone inquired who was there. A voice through the keyhole replied, "It's Bessy!" Upon which he commanded her to open the door and come in. Accordingly, she opened the door; but, on learning that Bilberry was not up, this sensitive creature would by no means be prevailed on to enter. The representations he made to her were not of the least avail in inducing her to advance; so that ultimately he found himself obliged to get up and put on his clothes, before he could learn the errand upon

which she came. Having finished at his toilet,—for he determined to sleep no more that morning, but to set forward on his journey without delay,—he opened the door, and showed himself to Miss Bessy in the passage. This damsel Mr. Thurland was very sorry to find in tears. She began by relating to him how she had not closed an eye of all that night; her master, the landlord, having discharged her from her situation the next moment after she went down stairs the preceding night, although she could not comprehend in what particular she had given serious offence: and here she poured another April shower of tears into her apron.

Bilberry, as may easily be supposed, was much affected at this woful sight; and as Bessy appeared to rely upon him in her misfortune, almost as a friend and adviser, he felt that he could do no less than take the quarrel upon himself, and do the best in his power to render her assistance.

But first, he endeavoured to afford a little consolation, by assuring her that Mr. Pogson was drunk last night, and therefore would be

very sorry when he grew sober again, to find he had acted so foolish and unjust a part as to discharge her at a moment's notice, not because she had given any particular offence, but because he himself happened to be in a pot-valiant passion. To this Miss Bessy replied, that she was sure not only her master but her mistress also were serious, because the latter, who at least was not drunk, actually paid her her wages up to that very day ; adding, that she dared not go home again until her year was out, because, if she did, her mother would be sure to kick her out of the house in a hurry. Mr. Thurland now inquired what her wages amounted to ; for being himself at that time in but indifferent circumstances, a thought crossed his mind that this money, if added to his own, might prove a little help in the way of setting himself up in some kind of business. Bessy replied that, at two guineas per year, the landlady had paid her a guinea and nine shillings, for little more than three months. At this, Mr. Bilberry, who before now had learned a little of the art of calculation, began to laugh

in spite of Bessy's grief, because, as he informed her, the mistress had paid her only about the odd guinea too much. The honest damsel smiled, and observed that it would be nothing but right to give it to Mrs. Pogson back again, for money ill come by never did any good. "Stop a bit," said Mr. Thurland, "let us look at it. Perhaps she has cheated you after all, for very likely it is not a good one." And he held out his hand, while Bessy drew the disputed gold from her pocket. He examined it; took it inside the room to ring, lest the sound should reach the ears of Mrs. Pogson; and then observed that it was a good one. "But they do not deserve to have it again," said he; "no, Bessy, not for their ill usage of you. They shall not have it again, that I will take care of myself." And then Bilberry very deliberately put it into his own pocket.

We are seriously grieved to be called upon to relate such an equivocal piece of honesty as the above, on the part of so distinguished a character as Mr. Bilberry Thurland. How it may be defended or excused we know not, un-

less the reader will charitably take into consideration the comparative greatness of the temptation, and the forlorn condition in which, at this period, that unhappy young man was placed.

Neither, before we condemn, must we forget the kind of education he had received when a suckling ; and of which, without doubt, in great part, his present conduct was the fruit : for, when viewed in all its circumstances, we avow it plainly appears to be legitimately descended from the example of that most ingenious person, his mother. But the better to assure poor Bessy that in acting thus he had only her sole welfare in view, Mr. Thurland had no sooner pocketed her wages, than he immediately began to throw upon her benighted mind a little light touching the wickedness, and ingratitude, and deception of the world. He kindly inquired how long she had been in her present situation ; and being informed above two years, in astonishment he bid her look at that. Two years a good servant, he had no doubt ; and at last of all to be discharged in the dead of the

night for nothing. "Shameful!" said he, "and yet, to let you have your own way, here you would go and give these very people this money back again, which is all you have to depend on, because of their own blunders!—'Od bless my soul, Bessy, you are no more fit to live in the world than a bull-calf. They have made this mistake of their own accord, haven't they?—then who have they to blame for it? When people make mistakes, it is best to let them pay for them; and then, if they find it out, they'll take better care another time: but if they do not, there is no harm done. Though after all, Bessy, I know you so well, I couldn't trust you with this guinea in your own hands; for I am sure, if you had it, you would be for giving it back again. Folks may be too honest to live, let me tell you. While this guinea is in my pocket, I know it to be safe; but if you had it, ten to one but somebody would be persuading you out of it. As I told you last night, I happen myself to be out of place at this moment,—I assure you I love you very much indeed,—and, as I mentioned then, only you would not

hear me, or else, as I mentioned then, if you like to go along with me, we will do the best we can for ourselves ; and I am sure we shall want all the money we can get together, for every halfpenny is useful when folks have not much." At the mention of trying her fortune with Bilberry, Bessy again began to cry ; for although that rampant affection of hers half persuaded her to go, yet, like most other women in doubtful predicaments, she could not help crying, when perhaps it would have been difficult for her to explain exactly what about. On the other side, Mr. Thurland could do nothing better than strengthen his arguments by such representations as the following : " You see plainly what I am. You know me as well as if we had been bred and born together. I have some excellent prospects before me, for I will be bound to live one way or another, so that you need not cry for fear of starving. I don't mean to say I shall maintain you like a lady, to be sure ; though even that I may do in time, for there is no knowing yet what luck may come round for us ; but at the worst, if you are

willing to strive, I will be bound to get you into a way where money may be made. But as to a woman of your qualities staying two years in a pothouse, and then to be turned out of it like a dog, for little or nothing, I wouldn't put up with it."

Here Bilberry made a pause. It is somewhat singular that the more Mr. Thurland argued, the faster Miss Bessy grieved, and the more obstinate she became in denying him any answer by words. But this humour, he thought, would cure itself; and therefore, for a while, he showed no signs of impatience. Having waited a considerable time, and she making no reply, he again addressed her; remarking, that he did not want to persuade her to go against her own will,—she had better please herself one way or the other. "Only, if you go, and do not like it after a few weeks," he continued, "you can come back again, and do just the same as if you had never been out. But tell me at once what you will do, because if you will not go, I must. You see the sun will be up directly, and I want to be off." To all this,

Bessy still made no reply ; unless a huge sob, pumped up from the very bottom of her heart, might be considered one ; though Bilberry felt at a loss whether to consider it in the affirmative or negative. “ Come, then,” he observed, taking up the little bundle which contained his whole worldly possessions, “ if you will not go yourself, at all events let me out.” For it must be confessed, that now Bilberry had possessed himself of a guinea more than when he entered the house, he felt anxious to depart, that he might be out of the way of any accident which would perhaps place him under the unpleasant necessity of refunding. In reality, he did not so much care about the rising of the sun,—though he had particularly mentioned it,—as the rising of Mr. or Mrs. Pogson.

The sight of Mr. Thurland making towards the stair-head, with the serious intention of setting forward on his journey, raised Bessy’s sympathies to such a high pitch, that, had not the mortal fear of wakening her master and mistress acted as a restraint upon her passions, she most probably would have screamed aloud, and

dropped on to the landing in a hysteric: or were the author writing a novel, and describing an imaginary heroine in the above situation, he might perhaps have striven to excite his reader's feelings, by disposing of the forlorn damsel after a similar pathetic manner. As it is, he feels bound to the exclusive relation of truth, even though it be less touching than what he might have imagined of beauty in a fainting fit, and hence begs to observe that, instead of sinking on to the floor, Bessy hastened after Bilberry, and, in a wild agony, catching hold of those unsentimental appendages, his coat-tails, implored him to stay a little while longer until she had made up her mind. Bilberry thought on Mrs. Pogson and the guinea, and declared it impossible. "You have had all night to think on it," he observed, "and if you have not made up your mind now, you never will." The inexperienced Bessy could not think of asking such a kind young man as Bilberry to return the overplus of her wages before he went,—it would be little better than insulting him; but she satisfied herself by over and over again entreating

him to wait till after breakfast, and then she would either go with him at once, or let it alone for certain.

Mr. Thurland saw it advisable to fly into a passion with her ; so breaking out on a sudden, he swore he would not wait a minute longer ; and with this declaration, regardless of disturbing the landlord and landlady, he rushed down stairs, after the example of Bessy herself on the preceding night, and unbolting the door with all expedition, flew out of the house with a crack ; and, regaining the high-road, in five minutes was beyond reach or hearing of all the supplications of the miserable damsel left behind.

CHAPTER XII.

ADVENTURE AT A LADIES' BOARDING-SCHOOL, WITH
THE SAD DISASTER OF MRS. THORPE.

THOSE of our readers who delight to find virtue rewarded, and to see true affection attain its objects in spite of every difficulty, will be rejoiced, after the melancholy conclusion of the last chapter, on being informed that Mr. Thurland had scarcely reached the third milestone upon his journey before he was overtaken by the constant Bessy. Finding herself unable to endure his absence, he had not long left the house before a strong determination came across her mind to pack up such of the most useful and valuable parts of her apparel as she could conveniently carry, and follow him ; for though she had found it quite impossible to come to a

decision whilst Bilberry was present, yet the moment after he had quitted her sight, she very naturally began to ponder on those youthful charms which might have been hers had she willed it, but which now, in consequence of her own perverseness, were walking away from her as fast as possible — never, it might be, to return. We need not repeat that, under the existing condition of her feelings, the thought was more than she could well bear to entertain. Accordingly, after she had watched Mr. Thurland out of sight round the first turn in the road, she went into the house again, and taking off her shoes to preserve silence, hastened up stairs to her own room to pick out such things from her only box as might not well be dispensed with. Nobody, however, will be much surprised to learn that, when Bessy came to look over her wardrobe, she found difficulties in making her selection, and picked out as absolutely requisite first this thing and then that, until at length she fairly emptied her box by picking them all out. But as on trial it proved that no handkerchief of ordinary dimensions

would contain them, after spending half an hour in picking and sorting, she was constrained to bundle the whole into the box again, and carry it on the top of her head all away together. Feeling very much overcome by her want of rest and her grief combined, before finally taking her departure from Mr. Pogson's roof she drew herself a can of ale as a strengthener and support in her trouble; and having disposed of it in the ordinary way, took her band-box on her head, and bade a last good-b'ye to Mr. and Mrs. Pogson, before either of those worthy people was stirring.

It cannot be said that when young Mr. Thurland heard a voice calling after him, and turned to see whose it could be, he expressed any particular astonishment on beholding Miss Bessy; indeed, had he actually anticipated this proceeding on her part, he could scarcely have expressed less. But when he perceived the huge blue pasteboard box with which she had provided herself, he did smile to think how little she knew of the new way of life she had undertaken, to imagine she might hug

a whole washing of linen along with her wherever she went: for if the credulous reader has been so far imposed on by anything Mr. Thurland may have said, as to believe he had any intention of formally sitting down to any regular employment, we can only say it is time he was undeceived, this young gentleman not having in reality any the most distant intention of the kind. And though the tempting representations he so lately made to Miss Elizabeth might have a tendency to mislead that simple damsel into some such a belief, yet who would have thought that any reader, who by this time ought to know Bilberry's character and the drift of his education very thoroughly, could be so far imposed on as to credit expressions which with him were to be considered only in the way of trade? If such an one there be, let him from this fact feel assured that he has yet something to learn before he is perfectly fitted himself to go into the world; where, for saying what he does not mean to do, and doing what he says nothing about, every man is more or less a Bilberry.

The first thing Mr. Thurland did after being overtaken by his new companion was, retiring to a green bank by the road side, and making such fresh arrangements in Bessy's wardrobe as should adapt it the more conveniently to their present mode of travelling. In doing this, he followed the practice, with which of course he was extremely well acquainted, of that experienced person his mother. And though at the outset he found some difficulty in reconciling Bessy to the compact mode of packing up her gowns and finery which he adopted, yet the necessity of the occasion, added to the authority of his superior practical knowledge, ultimately caused her to surrender the matter entirely to his discretion. After doubling and redoubling, and doubling again after that, without the least feeling for ironing or mercy for starch, Mr. Thurland at length presented her with a small package, the bulk of which, under any circumstances, could not prove the least incumbrance, though containing every article, from the gown down to the very cap-strings, which before occupied a box

almost large enough to contain, on occasion, even Bessy herself.

These minor arrangements being brought to a conclusion, Mr. Thurland and his lady proceeded on their journey. Lest, however, the anxious reader should remain in any painful doubt as to what eventually became of the blue bandbox, we will take this opportunity to relate the economical manner in which that excellent article was disposed of; together with some odd incidents attending and consequent upon the sale.

About half-past eight in the morning, our travellers perceived themselves approaching a considerable village, at sight of which Mr. Thurland addressed himself to his companion, informing her, that while she herself should walk forward, and there wait on the other side of the town until he came up, at this place he would endeavour to sell the pasteboard box, for which now they had no farther use. To this arrangement Bessy very readily agreed; but, as after so long a walk her appetite had grown somewhat ungovernable, she charged

him to bring a few penny loaves and half a pound of butter along with him, as she dared not stay to breakfast at any house in the place lest the people should recognise her, it being a little town with which she was well acquainted. Mr. Thurland inquired whether her father and mother resided there, to which Bessy answered in the negative; but acknowledged that she had once been in service at Mr. Dirtacre's, the farmer there; and for that reason she wished to get through the town as fast as possible, without being seen by anybody. By the time this conversation was ended, they had come nigh upon the village. Bilberry gave his bundle into the hands of Bessy, and taking nothing in his own except the bandbox, sent that damsel forward, whilst he canvassed each house separately in search of a customer. Though this was the first instance of Mr. Thurland's carrying on business on his own account, yet he had been reared under too able a merchant not to know how to set about it, or to understand those general arts of trade which we have good reason to believe are very liberally adopt-

ed by thousands of those whose characters rank far higher in the mercantile world than did Mr. Thurland's at that time, or, we are sorry to say, at any time afterwards.

Calling to remembrance the practice of his mother, he put on a sharp business-like manner and appearance ; knocked at people's doors with the same confidence he would have knocked at his own, had he had one ; and darting a quick eye upon the servant or mistress, whichever might come to the door, demanded whether she would buy a good bandbox this morning? — the last he had, and no doubt the best in the lot. For a while he was unsuccessful ; all those whom he favoured with a visit returning him nearly the same answer,—they wanted nothing of the kind. In no degree cast down, Mr. Thurland persevered, and eventually was fortunate enough to meet with a young lady who promised better things. This was at a prim, old-maidenish-looking little house, about the centre of the village. On the knocker-plate of the door was painted, in white characters on a black ground, “ Mrs. Thorpe's School.”

Seeing this inscription, Bilberry promised himself a customer for certain; believing as he did that there is a difficulty in almost any young girl setting her eyes upon a good useful band-box without thinking she has something or other to put into it.

Sanguine as might be his anticipations, he had no expectation of meeting with such universal competition amongst his customers as he very shortly found to exist.

On Mr. Thurland's knocking at the door, it was opened by a crumple-faced old lady, who looked at him, not through, but over her spectacles: in all probability, the veritable Mrs. Thorpe herself. She held in her hand the stump of a soft goose-quill, most likely picked early in a morning off the village green; and beneath her left arm was tucked a split cane, the handle-end of which was comfortably wrapped round with a bit of cloth, to all appearance clipped from the skirt of her departed husband's coat.

"We have nothing to give away," said Mrs. Thorpe, even before Bilberry had time to ask

her a single question ; for she seemed to be in a huff at having been called down from her throne to open the door to so contemptible a person.

“ Cannot give to everybody,” said she again ; trying to close the door in Mr. Thurland’s face ; but that determined tradesman had meantime clapped his foot between the door and doorpost, so as very effectually to prevent the execution of Mrs. Thorpe’s design. Seeing this impediment so impudently thrust in her way, the schoolmistress’s choler began to ascend. Twitching off her spectacles as quick as lightning, she forcibly screwed her mouth and nose into as many hard and severe folds as the vent of a pudding-bag, and then saluted Mr. Thurland with the dishonourable epithets of “ insolent puppy” and “ audacious scoundrel.” At the same time, she thrust her cane through the nick of the door, and very hardly threatened to lay upon his ankle if the foot was not instantly withdrawn. Every pane of glass in the window at this moment had a young face in it, eager to catch a glimpse of the hero out-

side, who thus dared to dispute the authority of Mrs. Thorpe even upon the sacred field of her own step. Amongst the rest, were two or three young ladies peeping over the green blind, who, judging from their size, had no doubt outgrown the terror of the cane, and in some degree even the government of the mistress herself. These indulged themselves with an unrestrained smile at the tussle going on without fear of after rebuke: but chancing to obtain a sight of the blue box which Bilberry held under his arm, one of them hastened to the door. "Stop, ma'am," said she to Mrs. Thorpe; "has he got bandboxes to sell?"—"I don't know what he has got, nor care neither," answered Mrs. Thorpe; "he is an impudent fellow, be he whoever he may." And again she squeezed the door in a style which, had Bilberry been troubled with corns, would have sent him limping for a week after; but the thick sole on his shoe proved an excellent piece of defensive armour against the power of Mrs. Thorpe's press. The question which Mr. Thurland had just heard asked by

the young lady inside inspired him with fresh spirit to persevere.

He put his mouth to the nick, and declared he had as good a box to sell as hands ever made ; adding his hopes that the excellent lady inside would be so obliging as to allow him only to show it to the young people, for he wanted neither to beg nor borrow, but to deal fairly in the way of business. This soothing speech found an immediate supporter in the young lady who wished to become a purchaser ; she, in very kind language, giving Mrs. Thorpe to understand that for want of another box she had scarcely room to stow her things anywhere, when, for a shilling or two, she perhaps might have a very good one. “ I am astonished, Caroline,” said Mrs. Thorpe, instinctively putting on again her spectacles of office ; “ I wonder you can wish me to open the door to a fellow who has behaved himself in this scandalous manner. You can buy a box any day of people who know their places and deserve encouragement ; but the more you give way to such fellows as this, the worse you make them. Be-

sides, I cannot tell what he may not attempt when he has got the door open, and you know we have not got a single male on the premises to prevent him. It is my duty to keep you all in the paths of righteousness so long as you are under my care." At these observations Miss Caroline smirked, as did likewise all the other damsels of an age equal with herself; while the junior females looked down extremely grave to hear so severe a lecture from their mistress.

"Indeed, Miss Caroline," observed the latter lady, vehemently pushing at her spectacles as though she would almost force them into her eyes; "you surprise me, indeed you do. I thought you knew better than to laugh on such a subject. Depend upon it, when you grow a little older you will regret having treated lightly the observations I now make." Here the dignified schoolmistress, like a queen-dowager, swept across the room to her chair, which stood in a corner on longer legs than all the rest, and left the door in the quiet possession of Miss Caroline. And now she and Mr. Thurland began to strike a bargain. But it must

be known that in the mean time three or four other misses had gathered about Caroline with intentions the same as that young lady's,—we mean of looking at Mr. Bilberry and purchasing a bandbox. One of them, who had come up rather too late to obtain possession of the article in question, inquired with some concern whether that was the only one Mr. Thurland had. “I am sorry to say it is, ma'am,” replied Bilberry, “the very last I have.” No sooner had he uttered this withering truth, than exclamations of “Oh dear!” simultaneously burst from three several places in the female group before him; and all eyes were turned on that enviable creature Miss Caroline, who had taken the box-lid off, and, with the scrutinizing eye of a serious purchaser, was examining the interior and feeling the thickness of the pasteboard sides. “Could not you make us one or two?” asked another of the disappointed. “Oh yes, to be sure,” said Mr. Thurland, “as many as you like, if you can wait until this time next year, when I come round again. Only, when I make them to order, I generally receive a small de-

posit at first, just to keep myself from being imposed on ; because, without that, I do assure you, there are people who will order things for the sake of making a show, and when they are done, make an excuse, and turn them back upon one's hands again."

"What a shame!" exclaimed the young ladies, in a regular chorus, and looking at one another with amazement.

But they agreed that it was impossible to wait a year, as they were already so straitened for room by having so many in such a small house, that they had not a drawer nor a closet to turn round in : therefore Mr. Thurland obtained no deposits for future bandboxes.

By this time Miss Caroline had summed up her opinion and was fully prepared to give in her verdict upon Bilberry's box, which she did to the effect, that though it was a good stout-made box, yet she thought it to be an old shop-keeper, if not positively a second-hand one. Mr. Thurland appeared astonished beyond expression to hear this, and, in some measure, Miss Caroline also was astonished at herself,

when he assured her that he had not had it by him a single day. "That is very odd," said she, half doubting her own judgment; "then I think it has soon got very dirty."

"Caroline!" screamed Mrs. Thorpe, from her long-legged chair, "do not have anything to do with it, my dear. Who knows what nasty places it may have come out of? There are some of the filthiest people go a-hawking of any in the world. Tell him to take it away; and shut the door, good girl. Nobody knows what vermin it may not bring into the house. I would not take it into a bed-room of mine if I might have it for nothing. I am sure it cannot be clean."

The insinuations here conveyed by the delicate widow Thorpe, though as groundless as any one need wish, were of a nature which easily affected the sensitive nerves of clean Miss Caroline, and at the moment caused her unconsciously to leave hold of the box entirely.

This was a signal for the three damsels that stood by, and whose hopeless situation for lack of boxes gave them more strength of nerve than

Caroline possessed, to make a dead rush at it, under a strong impression of the truth of that old saying, that possession is three parts of the law. They all three got hold of it together, and while one secured the lid to herself, the remaining two disputed possession of the carcase. A female disturbance might have been the result, had not Miss Caroline—the moment she saw them thus, as it were, taking the bargain out of her hands — exclaimed that she herself had not yet given it up, and, by way of at once securing it, put her hand in her pocket and given it a toss outwards to shake up the purchase-money. Thus acting upon a principle the same as that which occasionally may be noticed in some sort of dogs, who, after rolling over and over, and finally turning up their noses at, a dirty bone, return to it with an appetite perfectly wolfish, should they chance to perceive any other dog less particular in his taste about to take up with and carry it off: though we would have the reader bear in mind that this illustration is given solely for its peculiar aptness touching the acting sentiment, and not with

the least intention of degrading so excellent a young lady as Miss Caroline undoubtedly was; by a comparison of her with any four-footed animal whatever.

Having in a hurry raked her silver together, this young lady inquired the price of the box.

“ Well,” said Bilberry, “ I will not be hard on you, as you do not seem to like it quite so well as I could wish to see; I will make an abatement for once, and we’ll say two-and-six, though, on my word, I have never sold one before for less than three-and-three-pence.”

Before Caroline could reply, Mrs. Thorpe again screamed out,

“ Half-a-crown for that thing! give no such money, my dear! If he had any shame left in him, he would be ashamed of asking such a price. Shut the door, my dear, and do not exchange another word with such an imposing fellow. He would not scruple to ask you ten shillings, if he thought he could get it, for a piece of rubbish not worth ten pence. Have nothing to do with it, Caroline; you are a deal

better without it, my dear. I really don't know that he has come honestly by it."

"That is too bad," said Mr. Thurland to Caroline: then addressing Mrs. Thorpe with some heat, he shouted loud enough to be heard, not only by that lady herself, but also by her neighbours on both sides: "I'll tell you what, missis; I am as honest as ever you was in your life, though, perhaps, I haven't got quite such a smart pig-sty to live in. I neither steal boxes, nor pick up goose-feathers in other people's farm-yards, and then sell them to my scholars for quills, as some folks do."

This last home-thrust at Mrs. Thorpe had the effect of setting the whole school in a titter, and of bringing down from her elevation that irritable widow herself. She advanced towards the door, striding over the children's forms, spitting insolent scoundrels and low-bred puppies as fast as possible; and in her passion entirely regardless of the fact, that at every stride across those juvenile seats her petticoats were naturally hoisted so high as to display in great perfection her garters and the white tops of her

stockings, to the huge admiration of surrounding sucklings. She shook her cane with almost as much sublimity as Homer represents the great Jupiter to have shaken his locks over Olympus ; and at the same time she screamed in the voice of a peacock, “ Caroline ! hussey ! jade !—I insist on that door being shut and bolted this instant. The wretch ! To insult me in this gross manner !”

But before this stick of brimstone, Mrs. Thorpe, could reach the door, Caroline, in terror at the dreadful sounds and meanings behind her, slipped half-a-crown into Mr. Thurland’s hand, and in despair was endeavouring to drag the bandbox into the room, when unfortunately, before she could achieve that difficult point, widow Thorpe’s hands were at the back of the door panels. At this juncture the unhappy bandbox chanced to be placed half in and half out of the doorway ; and before it could be extricated from its perilous situation, the schoolmistress had driven the door up to its posts like a thunder-clap, crushing the new purchase between them as flat as a pancake. Caroline

screamed murder, and, it is very probable, sank on to the floor ; while Mrs. Thorpe herself,—for the pith of the catastrophe remains to be told,—in striving to force the door to be-fore she had come well within scope of it, sadly over-reached herself, so that when the door drove up, she lost all power of support through having thrown the whole of her strength forward, and, we are very sorry to record, fell over the children's seats head foremost ; thus presenting to the horrified school-room a spectacle to be thought on behind a screen, but not to be de-scribed in print. It is consolatory to know that Mr. Thurland was on the other side of the wall ; and let us add, that this exemplary young man, so far from waiting, as many in-qui-sitive people would have done, to peep through Mrs. Thorpe's window at the scene within, walked away as fast as possible, rejoicing in Caroline's half-crown, and, regaining the king's highway, tramped in high spirits, at his present success in business, after the exquisite and lovely Bessy, who, with great impatience had for full half an hour been anxiously antici-

pating his arrival on the other side of the village.

The anxiety evinced by Miss Elizabeth, or, we may now begin to distinguish her by the title of Mrs. Thurland junior,—although we must admit it is a title of compliment rather than of propriety, she not possessing any legal claim whatever to it ;—the anxiety, we repeat, evinced by her for Bilberry's arrival was not entirely attributable to her affection for that young man. In part it arose from her great and increasing appetite for victuals ; she being, contrary to all heroines whom modern authors have described, and consequently very unfavourably for our story, gifted in no contemptible degree with that vulgar animal propensity of eating largely, which is the total ruin of all refined feelings and angelical sentiments. Without descending to describe the particular dishes she liked best, we may, in short, avow that she was a great consumer of all sorts of food, both animal and vegetable : and though the author blushes while he makes so degrading an acknowledgement on the part of one of the fairest

creatures in creation, yet has he no better apology to offer than such as may be afforded by the necessities of nature. This, he is aware, must be considered meagre enough; for to say simply that whoever lives must eat, will, we are afraid, be esteemed by our present refined hosts of genteel romance writers, a very shallow reason for our having described Mrs. Thurland junior as capable of eating, especially of eating three times a day, whereas even those vulgar fellows amongst our predecessors, who have had the boldness so far to outrage common decency as to represent their sentimental heroines as requiring food at all, have never gone beyond three times within as many months, maintaining them in the most surpassing loveliness of aspect, and excellence of health, upon no more victuals than falls to the share of a church mouse, who usually gets a snack of sacramental bread but thrice a quarter.

We shall not attempt to dispute the truth of this, but satisfy ourselves by merely observing, that as it is a kind of nature which we never

had the fortune to observe, and our task being to describe exclusively such as we have seen and heard, and known to exist, we shall abide by our own every-day experience, and at once proceed to relate the kind of breakfast made by Mr. and Mrs. Thurland junior, on the morning in question.

Sitting down in a hedge-bottom, with two pair of knees for a table, this amiable couple prepared to satisfy their hunger. Bessy first inquired for the loaves and butter she had ordered ; but Bilberry immediately informed her that they were not forthcoming, as, he thanked God, he knew a rather better way of providing a meal than that of paying for it. The more economical principle thus alluded to he soon made manifest, by drawing from his coat-pocket several lumps of bread, which Bessy instantly recognised to be of her own cutting for supper the previous night, while she was yet in the office of servant-maid at Mr. Pogson's. After these, Mr. Thurland succeeded in extracting from the same place, the two drumsticks of that famous cock of whom the reader already pos-

sesses much information, and which had been helped on to his plate by the good-natured host the preceding evening, along with some other parts equally if not more tender. These legs had presented to Bilberry's prophetic eye a very nice meal for the morrow; and with that dexterity which had been taught him from his birth, he had contrived to slip them unobserved into his pocket, instead of his belly: and though, after supper, Mrs. Pogson had wondered what was become of the leg-bones when she missed them from Bilberry's plate, yet her native modesty and bashfulness with strangers, of which it will be remembered at that very meal she gave so notable a specimen, prevented her putting to her guest any question concerning them. Even had she done so, surely we cannot entertain so poor an opinion of Bilberry's readiness and sagacity, as to fear he would have been in the least puzzled for a satisfactory answer. As it was, he got clear off uncatechised, and thus was enabled now to lay before Miss Bessy the two miniature hams above-mentioned.

This damsel would gladly have taken a cup of tea along with her meat, but could not obtain hot water, or else she happened to have by her a small paper, in which was screwed up about an ounce of congou, accumulated by degrees from Mrs. Pogson's tea-caddy ; and which she had always kept in her pocket, on purpose to strengthen occasionally that poor swipes which her master and mistress were in the habit of leaving for her drinking, after they had themselves extracted all the goodness of the leaves. Instead, she was constrained to satisfy herself with a pennyworth of milk obtained from a passing man-milkmaid, with which, for once, Mr. Thurland indulged her in consideration of her not being yet well accustomed to the new mode of living she had adopted : or else, he gave her to understand, that until their resources were more enlarged, or their prospects more certain, they must not forget that saying which his mother had often repeated to him when a child, a penny saved is a penny earned.

While Mr. Thurland was giving utterance

to the above excellent sentiment, his new natural wife Bessy, as if unconscious of possessing any ears, had fallen very earnestly to work upon one of the legs of Mr. Pogson's heroic boiled fowl, which she had nearly stripped of its meat, so that Bilberry had to look somewhat sharp about him to obtain possession of the other ; particularly as he observed her cast a preparatory eye at it over her own bare bone, as though secretly she promised herself to fasten upon it very shortly : and, to the disgrace of young Bilberry be it said, great as was his affection for Bessy, it yet extended not so far as to induce him to sacrifice the remaining morsel to her wants, while his own remained unsatisfied. Their meal being quickly ended, and the bones thrown into the next field, our two adventurers proceeded on their journey ; Mr. Thurland entertaining Miss Bessy on the way with the relation, at large, of his success in disposing of the bandbox ; that event having before been only briefly alluded to.

CHAPTER XIII.

A DRY CRUST ; BUT WHICH, IF THE READER BE AN EPICURE, HE WILL VALUE NOT FOR THE FLAVOUR IT POSSESSES, BUT FOR THAT WHICH IT CONFERS ON THE REST OF THE FEAST.

WHILE this excellent pair were journeying on they knew not whither, and with the full intention of doing they knew not what, neither of them seeing much more of their way in the world than does a benighted traveller in November, who knows not whether his next step may be on to a money-bag, or into a dust-hole, Bessy began to inquire into the intentions entertained by Mr. Thurland with respect to their future mode of life. She wished to know in what town he intended to settle, what business he should begin with, and how victuals were to be obtained if things did not succeed.

To all this Bilberry replied in brief, by telling her it was quite impossible to answer those questions until he saw what description of places they should arrive at, and remarked which business was likely to succeed there; because, he observed, if they were to settle what trade they would be before they knew whether any of that kind were wanted, it might so happen that they should do something equally foolish with carrying coals to Newcastle and crapes to Norwich. This answer was not so satisfactory to Mrs. Thurland, junior, as it might have been to some other persons; and accordingly she questioned Bilberry as to what he had meant by telling her only that same morning, how he could put her into a way of earning plenty of money if she would? To which the young man replied, that he had promised no more than he should be able to perform, though at this moment he could not point out the exact way of it. "There are many ways of earning money," said he; "and as all the rest of the world is able to find out and get into them, surely there is room enough left in such a wide space for two people more."

A discourse followed, so long as to last three hours,—the above is a clipping of it;—but, upon the whole, possessing no particular interest in itself; leading to no decisive result concerning the subject of it, which, indeed, is the principal fault of many long discourses, though sometimes clothed in very excellent language; and the author having, beside, some more agreeable matter in hand wherewith to interest the reader, he is induced to make no more than a bare mention of it. Be it sufficient to observe, that in the course of this long debate, our two travellers, by way of illustration to the argument they were carrying on, had to calculate the amount of the several monies possessed by each, when it was found that, added together, they came to no less a sum than five pounds sixteen shillings and twopence farthing; of which one pound ten shillings and a farthing were the individual contribution of Bessy, and the remaining four pounds six shillings and twopence, including the halfcrown obtained at Mrs. Thorpe's, composed the personal worth of Mr. Thurland: a

most encouraging capital to begin the world with. As such a sum, not only because of its relative magnitude, but also from being the whole fortune of these adventurers, was not to be disposed of lightly, a discussion arose between our young people as to the best method of laying all, or any part of it, out. But not having decided the previous question of their future occupation, upon which this one very much depended, they found a difficulty standing in the way of a conclusion, and therefore very wisely turned over so important a point to the decision of future circumstances. The more especially were they inclined to do this, by observing, at no great distance before them, the spires and smoke of a considerable town; where, in all probability, they were destined to gain such practical knowledge as should enable them to settle these theoretical matters at once.

Before we finally conduct our heroes thither, the reader will find some benefit in being rather more fully informed than he has hitherto been of the state of affairs between them, and the

relative situations in which they stood, or at least appeared to stand, to each other. To begin, then, with her whose sex demands from all gallant and well-bred gentlemen, whether authors or readers, the earliest attention.

Doubtless it will be recollected, that at the time Mr. Thurland and Miss Elizabeth were discoursing at the top of Mr. Pogson's stairs, the former incidentally mentioned to Bessy that he himself was at this time unfortunately out of place. But very probably it escaped the reader's notice that Bessy did not make inquiries thereon as to the nature of Bilberry's profession, or what kind of a situation he was now in search of. Neither had she done so between then and the time of which we are here speaking; but taking it for granted, from his personal appearance and discourse, that Mr. Thurland was a clever young man, who would very readily get himself into work again, and by the profits of that and his affection for her combined, be both able and willing to go swimmingly through the world with herself tacked to him, she had very agreeably pictured in her

mind the whole course of her future delightful life. First, she had planned that they should get married directly; and for this service she had laid out the capital of five pounds sixteen shillings and twopence farthing as a sufficiency.

Then, by a very slight effort of fancy, and through the medium of that figure which rhetoricians denominate vision, she had beheld the snug little house in a very pleasant situation where they should abide; herself the sole and undivided mistress. After that, came up before her enraptured eye,—if we may borrow of the romance writers so elegant a phrase wherewith to embellish our common subject,—came up, we repeat, before her enraptured eye that family of fourteen or fifteen with which she firmly intended to bless Mr. Thurland, and aid and abet the future population of the world. All this she beheld in prospective as plainly as if it had actually come to pass; besides various other happy visions of a similar nature, which might be mentioned in detail, were we not too thickly surrounded by other matters touching

the more substantial realities of life to have any spare room for indulging in the descriptions of such golden dreams. However, to Miss Bessy herself they served very delightfully to supply the place of that true knowledge concerning Mr. Thurland's past life and his future intentions which, had she been acquainted with them, would not, in all probability, have been quite so agreeable to contemplate as were the charming prospects of her own making above alluded to; since, we imagine, it need scarcely be mentioned that Mr. Bilberry's visions of the future were of a complexion rather different to those just described as floating before the mind of the simple and inexperienced Bessy. He, poor fellow, judging of the future by the past,—if, indeed, he had thought or cared anything at all about the matter, but of which some doubts may be reasonably entertained,—had framed to himself a route precisely the contrary to that laid out by his companion. At all events, we may be well assured he had never contemplated the solemn ceremony of marriage, in the fulfilment of

which all his capital could not fail to be expended, as a fit proceeding to commence the world with. If the subject had entered his mind at all, he most certainly had designed entirely dispensing with the services of the parson on that occasion; as being not only the cheapest method, but also the most convenient to both parties while in their present unsettled mode of life, by leaving an opening for the legal and immediate dissolution of partnership whenever circumstances should render it necessary to fly asunder. Though, from the known character of Mr. Thurland, we feel ourselves justified in asserting our belief, that he would not have thought of deviating from the laws and customs of his countrymen, had he been in a condition to observe them without injury to himself, or had not the common practice of people of his peculiar tribe been, as it was, in favour of this mode of proceeding. For, as the truth had better be admitted broadly at once, than let out by drops and dredgings, we will plainly acknowledge the usual habit amongst that class of wandering merchants, of

whom Bilberry's own mother shone so distinguished a member, to be far more against than in favour of marriage by law ; it having been found by the experience of many generations a sort of shackle, not at all compatible with their peculiar manners and genius. How, as an individual, Mrs. Thurland, senior, had acted in this particular, her son was not exactly prepared for a certainty to say ; but, judging from her natural acuteness, and the great experience she had obtained in all parts, and amongst all sorts of people, no doubt can be entertained that in this, as in every other affair of importance, she had proceeded in the wisest manner. For having done so, she was one well to be trusted ; and could Bilberry only have had the benefit of her single example, he might unhesitatingly have followed it, with an assurance of being in the right. Without it, he had nothing to guide him except a general knowledge of the way of his class, and that natural good sense with which, as we have before had occasion to observe, he was somewhat liberally

endowed. Both these conduced to bring him to the conclusion given above ; and with this explanation we will complete the subject, merely observing, by way of postscript, that every other idea entertained by Mr. Thurland upon the remaining details of his domestic economy were as exactly opposite to the ideas of Bessy on the same subject, as on the article of marriage in the instance above given. And although of the two, Mr. Thurland's anticipations and plans did appear the most probable, yet such is the doubtful nature of most men's conjectures concerning the future, that the author feels bound to express his conviction that Bilberry might be just as far off the truth on one side of the question as was Bessy on the other ; for certainly, until people actually go forth into the world, and behold the mists of futurity cleared away by time, and their fortunes gradually unfolding before them, it is impossible to foretel what accidents, either good or ill, are likely to happen. Where we seem most certain, there comes a disappoint-

ment; and from causes with which we fancied ourselves thoroughly acquainted, arise effects that defy conjecture.

If the reader should wish to know whether Bessy was more right than Bilberry, or Bilberry more correct than Bessy, or whether, which is equally probable, both were wrong together, he must look farther into the remaining part of this history for satisfaction. Not, however, to quit them thus abruptly, we will see, in the next chapter, what kind of a lodging they ultimately settled in.

CHAPTER XIV.

OUR LOVERS ARRIVE AT WENBOROUGH.—THEIR LODG-
INGS AND LANDLADY DESCRIBED.

SUCH being the respective private reflections of these individuals, such the different views entertained by each, both with respect to one another, and to the manner of life they were entering upon, we may now resume our narrative, by following our hero and heroine into the town, which was before described as presenting itself at no very considerable distance down the road before them.

Without assuming a great poetical licence, we cannot attempt to describe the appearance they made on their entry as very classical or imposing. The sun had held on all morning through a sky without a single cloud ; and the

highway upon which they had walked was more than liberally supplied with a coating of midsummer dust: the consequence of which state of things was this, that both our travellers, but especially Miss Bessy, she being in a condition of flesh the least fitted for exercise in hot weather, were, in no inconsiderable degree, melted on the outside, so as to give them the appearance of having, like dried specimens, been newly varnished for preservation; while the dust thrown up by passing horsemen, and carried about by some of those little summer whirlwinds which seldom fail to convey the principal part of it on to the causeways for the particular convenience of foot-passengers, had settled very plentifully on every ledge and fold of their garments, and given to them, as well as to their shoes, something of the aspect of buff-coloured leather; added to which, several of the curls on each side Bessy's face had partaken of the general laxity, and, unable to maintain themselves in a spiral form any longer, now hung behind her shoulders and flapped in the wind like untwisted ropes. Altogether, their

aspect was not the most prepossessing imaginable, though they, innocent creatures! never considered about that, but pushed forward manfully, as if under the impression that as they themselves saw not nor regarded their own dust and perspiration, neither were they remarked by anybody else. Bilberry knew nothing of the town, not having the most remote recollection of his mother ever having taken him thither; and though Bessy had, great part of her life, dwelt within twenty miles of it, she had never visited it before; in fact she only knew it by name. This, she expressed her belief to be Wenborough.

The somewhat superior manner of living which, since the imprisonment of that poor woman his mother, young Thurland had been accustomed to in the homely household of that excellent character, Zachary Blunt, naturally enough had given him a disrelish for ever again taking up his abode, if he could help it, in one of those common town-lodging houses, a specimen of which was described in an earlier part

of this book. Practically, many new habits and new tastes had grown upon him; though in grain his old propensities were far from being overcome. Hence, he could not persuade himself at once to cast aside the former, and resume the latter; but, by a mixture of both, he endeavoured to make himself comfortable. Besides, his female companion could not, by any means, be expected to relish such an abrupt translation as that from the comparatively comfortable office of servant in a village ale-house, to the situation of wandering merchant's woman in a common lodging. Under these circumstances, he judged it the most advisable course to take a small private lodging in not the most splendid part of the town, and remain there, until, by a few days' experience, it was proved what might be permanently done.

From the apparent incongruity of their characters, our heroes attracted some little observation as they passed along the streets; for it must not be disguised, that, at present, they did not appear to be very exactly cut out for

each other. Mr. Thurland, notwithstanding his partial rearing in a rural homestead, still bearing in his air and personal appearance those characteristics of his tribe which cannot be mistaken. Dark, but well-moulded features; fine black eyes, an improvement on his mother's; bright curly hair hanging almost in ringlets, of the same dark colour with his eyes, and a strong, healthful, half-olive complexion: altogether, there was clearly visible in him a remote cross of the gipsy. He appeared to be a young man whom nature had well provided with sense, and experience of the common world with discretion. On the other hand, his companion, Miss Bessy, looked like a full-grown heifer fresh from the hills, where she had run wild all her life, without ever before having seen either a town or any of its inhabitants. Though not taller, she was in bulk considerably superior to Bilberry; and seen from behind, where her buttons and loopholes were all on the full stretch, so as to exhibit through the division of her gown body some fringe of a black skirt and a bone of her stays, she ap-

peared like a swelling bulb about to come through its outward covering, and might well have been mistaken for a thick, middle-aged woman. Her face, all frankness and confident simplicity, seemed, when contrasted with Mr. Thurland's, at a single glance to tell the future tale of both; while the loud tone in which she talked to her companion of their individual concerns, very conclusively proclaimed her fresh from the fields and hedges; nor did the little bundles which both of them carried in any degree tend to weaken those opinions which the before-mentioned appearances uniformly raised in the minds of all curious strangers.

After much wandering about, and seeking up and down for a convenient situation where to settle, they at length got into a part of the town the appearance of which bespoke it much upon an equality with their fortunes: in other words, it was such as well assured Mr. Thurland, that if ever he should rise to be a mayor or an alderman, and reside in the large house of a wealthy tradesman, he should still, whenever he reflected upon these

his first efforts, have ample room to make the glorious boast of having begun at the very bottom. In this humble part of the borough of Wenborough it was, then, that our young couple sought out their abode, and for the first time commenced housekeeping on their own account.

Nor were they long in obtaining a convenient lodging. Having observed pasted on to the wall at the bottom of a narrow entry a bit of dirty paper, on which was written in very unequal characters, "Rooms to Let," Bilberry made free to inquire at the next door concerning them, and was immediately referred up the passage. Bessy very strongly objected to taking up her residence in such a dark, dirty place as that, protesting she had never thought of such a thing as going to live in a hole where she should scarcely see daylight from one end of the week to the other. But Mr. Thurland found means to reconcile her, with many fair prospects and much anticipated happiness even in that obscure situation; adding his hopes that successful fortune would soon enable them

to remove to a better neighbourhood ; for which reason they should try for a short time to put up with this as well as they could ; especially when they considered that, in all probability, an obscure and unknown lodging would be best adapted to the profession which he might at first be reduced to take upon himself. This served to quiet the tongue, if not entirely to satisfy the wishes, of the young woman ; and therefore she followed Mr. Thurland up the passage, over the entrance of which was written “ Cinder-alley,” in quest of a lodging. The rooms that were to let they found situate on the second floor of a little house in the narrow yard into which Cinder-alley opened. They were reached by means of a flight of stone steps projecting from the wall, having a rail on the outer edge to prevent the tenant above tumbling over. On rapping at the door to make inquiry, an old woman, about four feet nine in height, but of an immense bulk, either of body or flannel petticoats, very cleanly in appearance although so poor, presented herself to answer Mr. Thurland’s ques-

tions. The rooms she had unoccupied were on the left-hand side of the door of general entrance, and she herself occupied those to the right. The former, as being those with which alone Mr. Thurland had to do, were two in number: one fronting the street out of which they had just come; and the other, a small one, looking into Cinder-alley yard. The prospect this way was delightful. A foreground composed of low eaves, and dingy walls, and smoke funnels, with various tinkling drains of refuse water meandering at the foot, which broke gradually into a pleasant grove of chimneys and gable-ends, diversified here and there with the reflected sunny glory of a dazzling skylight; and from thence the eye settled well satisfied upon a mud river of a beautiful raven hue, which, not ran, but slugged, close upon the outskirts of the town. The floors of both apartments were ebony-coloured and worm-eaten, like the crust of a Stilton cheese, nicely carpeted with white sand, and in some places considerably sunk from their original level. To describe them in a pleasing metaphor, they

were agreeably diversified with a continual succession of hill and dale. They were furnished, —one with a bed, two chairs, built when our great-grandmothers' backs ran two yards long, and required much propping, and an old chest like a vault in the churchyard : the other, with a round table, four chairs, like the above described, making up the half-dozen ; a set of drawers, of which the landlady herself monopolised the use ; three pictures, engraved with the artist's eyes shut, and framed with black laths ; and two snail-shells on the chimney-piece. Altogether, the interior appeared much more promising than from the outside aspect might have been anticipated. Indeed, when Bessy looked round at the contents, including young Mr. Thurland, she began to think it possible even there to make herself very comfortable. Some words to that effect having escaped her lips, and passed not entirely unmarked by the landlady, that decent person took the opportunity of addressing herself to Bessy ; well knowing from her former experience in these matters, that if the wife can but

be satisfied in the choice of a new lodging, it is ten to one but the husband consents also; whereas, should a husband be ever so much taken with a residence, and the wife be left unsatisfied, even if she be brought to dwell in it, she will keep the inconveniences thereto belonging in a state of continual agitation, until the poor sleek-headed man is literally badgered out of his selected hole again.

Mrs. Thornton, then,—for that was her name,—endeavoured to win over maid Bessy, by assuring her how very pleasant she would find the place; that she kept a very quiet house, being herself only a widow-woman with one daughter, and having no lodgers except a very old woman, also a widow, who made one like part of her own family. The neighbours, she continued, were most of them respectable people in their way; though there were one or two tenants at the upper end of the yard for whom she could not say much; only, thank God! they were too far off to give them any particular disturbance. In a word,

she descanted so temptingly on the comparative enjoyments of Cinder-alley, that, without farther hesitation, Bessy turned to Bilberry, and assured him she thought they should do there very well. Mr. Thurland also thought the same, providing the rent was not too much. The widow rubbed her hands over each other, as if dry-washing them, and smiled. The rent, she declared, should be set at as low a rate as possible; her object being very different to that of some people, who make a point of fleecing their lodgers, as if nobody in the world had a living to get besides themselves. "You seem to be young people," said she, "just setting up in life, as I should think by your looks. I suppose you have not been long married, if I may ask such a question?"

To this friendly inquiry of the widow's Bessy was about to reply, by assuring her that they were not yet married at all, but were going to be directly; when Bilberry, anticipating what her simplicity was about to give utterance to, prevented her words by taking the answer upon himself.

“ No, ma’am,” he observed, “ we have not indeed ; and as Mrs. Thurland’s friends do not know anything at all about it, we thought it best to get out of the way for awhile, till they are a little more reconciled.”

“ Oh, indeed !” exclaimed Mrs. Thornton, —some rusty feelings of her youth suddenly brightening through her eyes,—“ well, that is curious however !” But why it seemed to her so curious she did not go so far as to explain. “ You seem to be honest, well-meaning young folks, and I hope you will find yourselves very comfortable here. I am an old woman you see, and have been married myself. I know what it is ; for I have had three of them, blessed be God ! though he has seen fit to take them all away from me : and three better husbands woman never had. Thornton was a good man to me : but it is a sin to complain. I shall never have another in this world ; I am past that now. Sixty-nine ; going on for seventy : and you would hardly think it to look at me. That young woman who stood behind me at the door was my

second youngest daughter; the only one I have left at home. Seven I have, married; all to respectable, steady men, and well to do in the world; and three sons I have abroad;—poor things them! I have not heard these five years how they are going on. Ay dear! I sometimes think to myself if some of them should go and catch that yellow fever that people say so much about in them hot countries, what a thing it would but be! And then I make myself so miserable you don't know. Ay, they little know how their old mother troubles herself about them, when perhaps they are not thinking about themselves. But then, after all, one hopes for the best; though, the Lord knows, *I* have not much to hope for in this world! My time is almost done; I shall soon be called away." And here the grieving widow lifted up the corner of her neckerchief, and wiped away either a single dry tear or the shadow of one. Bessy was so affected by the widow's pitiful discourse as to be almost on the point of joining in her visible

grief. But Bilberry, more discerning, easily perceived that widow Thornton was one of those lachrymose, complaining people, who, to take their own words for it, are continually in a world of trouble, yet are never really affected ; for they eat heartier, live longer, and wear out more husbands, than any other description of people whatever. Her sorrows were no more regarded by him than they would have been had she been venting them, as usual when she had nobody else to address, to the fender and fire-irons. He knew that this sort of grieving is a mere habit, during which those persons who accustom themselves to it can summon a drop of eye-water just as easily as an ordinary individual can spit. He stood silent a moment, and then again inquired about the rent. Widow Thornton smoothed down her neckerchief ; put off her doleful thoughts as readily as she might have laid aside her petticoat ; and, assuming her former agreeable look, expressed to Mr. Thurland her hope that he would not consider two shillings per week too much.

Bilberry replied, that certainly it was not very extravagant; though, nevertheless, if she could say eighteen-pence instead, he should like it all the better. The widow looked grave; and casting her eyes downward, began with the point of her toe to scrape together into a little heap the sand which sprinkled the floor, while she observed that two shillings were the very lowest she could take. If she could have said eighteen-pence, she certainly would; but she made a point of acting honestly towards everybody, and never saying more, for the sake of trying to impose on them, than she meant to accept.

“Why,” said she, “you may believe me, when I say that I let them to the last person that lodged here for three and sixpence a week; only he proved himself a great scoundrel to me; for after taking a deal of notice of my daughter, and promising to marry her, so that we quite believed in him, and let him eat half his victuals at our table, he started off one night unawares; never

paid me a single farthing of rent for all the time he was here; and took, besides, a pair of good yellow blankets out of one of these drawers to finish off with."

Either at this catastrophe, or else at some odd thought which suddenly came into his head, Mr. Thurland could not help laughing; for he assured the good woman that he should feel particularly happy to engage the lodging at the same high rate, if she would allow him the same rate of payment. Mrs. Thornton smiled very dolefully, and hoped she should never live to see the face of such another scoundrel under her roof again.

After some farther discussion, which being upon so insignificant a subject is scarcely worthy of record, it was mutually agreed between the parties, that as one could not take eighteen-pence, nor the other give two shillings, they should meet half-way; or, in ordinary phrase, split the difference. This being done, Mr. Thurland relieved all the widow's fears of having met with another scoundrel, for

one week at least, by depositing in her hand one shilling and ninepence rent for the ensuing seven days.

The old woman volunteered to send for such articles of food as her new tenants might require, and then retired; leaving the young couple to look round their lodging at leisure.

CHAPTER XV.

THE FUGITIVES ARE PURSUED, AND OVERTAKEN
SHORTLY AFTER THEIR ARRIVAL AT THEIR LODG-
INGS.—THE INEFFECTUAL SEARCH MADE BY SAM
POGSON ; WITH OTHER MATTERS NO LESS AGREEABLE.

At the conclusion of the last chapter, we left Mr. and Mrs Thurland jun. in a situation so peculiarly critical, that it is very probable the reader is pluming his feathers in anticipation of a description which, like the business of a dovecote, shall consist of nothing but billing and cooing. We are much grieved, however, to state, that, promising as the preliminary circumstances may have been, we have not at present any matter of the kind to lay before him.

At this, the author himself feels perhaps even more disappointment than doth his reader ; for never before did any author make more certain of the matter of his next page, than, at the

finishing of the last chapter, did we of recording, at the commencement of this, a very pathetic and melting scene.

But, in truth, the consequences which might naturally have been expected to ensue after Bilberry and Bessy were left together in their apartments, were for the present prevented by a most unexpected and perplexing occurrence.

Instead, then, of detailing that final consummation of our young people's loves, for a description of which the reader is already on tip-toe, we must beg him to suspend his anxiety on that particular a brief season, while we relate the odd circumstances by which the conjunction of these young satellites was so suddenly and shamefully prevented.

Miss Elizabeth, who already began to feel her importance as a wife-intended and a "woman of the world," had expressed an earnest desire to celebrate their arrival at port and house-warming by having a pound and a half of fried sausages and a dish of nice new potatoes for supper : and she and Bilberry were in the act of holding a privy council upon it,

when, instead of the contemplated dish, both their own hearts suddenly leapt into their mouths at the ominous sound of various feet being heard ascending the outside stairs of their lodging, together with the commingled music of several voices, amidst which the well-known tongue of "Samil Pegsun" might be plainly distinguished, as he bawled out to those along with him, "Are you sartin this is th' place, I ax you agen? Dom it, I can get no anser from nobody!"

On hearing this, Bessy's face changed colour in a fearful manner,—instantly passing from the hue of a ripe Ripston-pippin, to the appearance of a keg of butter. Bilberry flew to the door, and shot both bolts before his friend Mr. Pogson had taken hold of the latch. Then, turning round, he exhorted Bessy immediately either to jump out of the front window or hide herself; while he hastened into widow Thornton's side of the premises, and instructed that personage how to proceed for the salvation of her new tenants.

Bessy was in a sad consternation what to do

She would have given her soul to have been able to squeeze herself into any old crack of the boards, or behind a cobweb in a corner. To jump out of a window, even on the first floor, was a dreadful expedient ; for who knows that she might not have dropped on to the shoulders of some person passing below ? or, worse still, have her person squelched, like a barrow of butcher's offal, on to the rugged pavement underneath ? And as to the other alternative, of hiding herself, it appeared almost as impossible in that small space, as to hide an elephant in a closet. Something, however, must be done, for the invaders were rapping at the door, and peeping through the window, in hopes of catching a glimpse of the fugitives, though luckily the deepening of the evening prevented Bessy being observed by them. She flattened herself as much as possible, and squeezed up between the far side of the bed-curtains and the wall ; hoping that amid the gloom which prevailed her bulk would not be discovered. Meantime, Mrs. Thornton had received the instructions of Bilberry as to what course she should take :

and now, while that young hero himself sought a precipitate hiding-place in a neighbouring house which happened to be untenanted, and which therefore was not likely to be suspected ; —the old widow hastened to the door to answer the violent assaults of “ Samil Pegsun,” whose rage on finding himself arrested by a brace of bolts, caused him to thunder away as manfully as doth an industrious blacksmith at his smithy.

No sooner had the widow withdrawn the last bolt, than the door flew back, and Mr. Pogson rushed in exclaiming, “ Ay, consarn your jacket, I’ll larn you how to interlope afore other folks is out of bed ; dom you, will I.” At the same time clasping his arms round widow Thornton, thinking, in the dusk, that landlady to be his old servant Bessy. “ What ! I’ve got you, have I ?” he continued, as he hugged the widow in his arms after a fashion which, if she had not been providentially provided with such a plentiful rotundity of flannel petticoats as gave to her more the feel of a mattress than of

a living body, might have been to the cost of her ribs and collar-bones. "Dom your nasty soal, what you couldn't go after all wi'out drinking a can of ale afore you went, could you? and leaving th' cock running in at th' bargain, till th' bar-floor was all of a swim, and iver so many gallons of ale lost!"

The widow endeavoured to get in a word to assure him he had got hold of the wrong person, but Mr. Pogson was too wise to hear her. "Say noat about it; I tell you, you sharn't scrape out no how. I've got you, and now I'll make you pay for it, or else I'm dom'd:" saying which, in addition to all the rest, he clapped his broad palm over her mouth, to stop in her excuses and exculpations.

More terrified than hurt, widow Thornton now kicked her legs about in all directions, and struggled most valiantly to disengage herself; but "Samil" only griped her the faster, and vociferated louder and louder, "It is no use you trying to get away I tell you, for you shall pull my arms off afore I'll let you go."

What might have been the consequence there

is no telling, had not at this instant Mrs. Thornton's daughter rushed in from the next room with a candle in her hand, and by throwing a little light on the subject, as well as by her language, convinced Mr. Pogson of his mistake. He left hold of the widow in a moment, looked at her as astonished as if a transformation had passed before his eyes, and then exclaimed, "Dom mae, missis! I took you for that Bess of arn." Then turning to the two gentlemen whom he had brought with him, said he, "Did onybody iver see sich a thing in their lives? It's a good job my missis warn't here." Again looking at the widow, who now stood puffing like a bagpipe, straightening her petticoats after the rumpling and tossing they had received, Mr. Pogson asked loudly, "Where is she?—where is she, I ax you? I know she's somewhere under this roof, and I'll have her if I ransackle ivery bed and cupboard in th' house first. Dom her, she's spilt about ten shilling worth of ale beside all th' rest: tell me where she is this minnit, or else I'll kick up sich a dust as you not like, I dew assure you!"

Mrs. Thornton replied, that if either he or any other man dared to meddle with her beds and cupboards under a lying pretence of looking for somebody that was never there, she would call in her neighbours directly, and show both Mr. Pogson and those who were along with him to the right about.

This threat of defiance aroused the old landlord's ire, and intending to ask the widow whether she meant to oppose him, "What! you compose me, do you?" said he; "then if that's what you intend, we'll soon see which shall have it."

And hereupon "Mr. Pegsun" rushed towards the bed-room where Bessy was hidden, knocked widow Thornton almost over in his passage, whisked the candle out with one of his coat-laps as he whirled round the corner of the widow's daughter, and in less than half a minute was in the room, to the great consternation of Elizabeth, plunging both his fists into the mattress and bed-clothes as industriously as might a belated baker into a trough of paste. Having thumped the feathers in a manner for

which any bed-maker in the world would have heartily thanked him, without finding the object of his search, Mr. Pogson desisted from this labour, which had thrown him into a prodigious heat of body ; and instead, pulled up the foot-curtains, and crept under the bedstead in search of Bessy. That poor damsel, who had overheard the whole of the proceedings above related, was in a pitiable condition through fright and apprehension. These combined emotions had thrown her into a frying heat and perspiration, so that, could she at that moment have been brought to light, she might well have been mistaken for a roll of that very baked sausage for which she herself had so recently been longing. But when she heard her old master scrambling under the bed in search of her, and felt his accursed fingers poking about her toe-ends and ankles, her terror became extreme. By a providential dispensation of good fortune for which Bessy could never after be sufficiently thankful, Mr. Pogson actually grasped her legs in his hands without perceiving in the then highly excited state of his mind that they were

human. Instead, from their being thick, solid, and well-turned, he mistook them for the legs of some old chest or other standing in the corner. Thus, then, having gathered several handfuls of mingled lint, dust, and feathers, and well-nigh choked himself into the bargain, besides rubbing off the skin of his nose-end against the boards, he pushed himself like a backing horse from under the bed, well satisfied that his old servant was not there at least.

Meantime the two gentlemen whom Mr. Pogson had brought along with him as assistants,—one being the constable of his parish, and the other no less a personage than Thomas the cock-portrait painter,—were not suffered to be idle. Mrs. Thornton knew not well how to oppose so formidable a trio in open warfare, and had therefore resorted to stratagem. Under the pretence of fully satisfying them that she harboured nobody on her premises, she had conducted these two worthies into her rock-cellar as the most likely hiding-place, and there prevailed on them to remove, for their own full satisfaction, a great quantity of lumber which

she had long wished to have carried out of its present corner, but hitherto had not been able to get accomplished for want of some one strong enough to undertake the job.

This being done, they rejoined Mr. Pogson, who yet waited in Bessy's room, perfectly satisfied that they had either been misinformed as to the retreat of the fugitive couple, or had mistaken the house. "Samil Pegsun" was not, however, so easily convinced; "Noa, noa," said he, "I tell you we're right enough, I know we are. What do you call these?" casting his eye on the parcels which Bilberry and Bessy had laid on the table; "these is their bundles, dom 'em. We'll have these ony how; though I reckon they'll turn out like that Lunnun rascad's portmantle, stuffed with my own things!" With which philosophical reflection he laid hands on the articles in question, and was about to force them into his wide-mouthed pockets, had not widow Thornton interposed, and with many declarations claimed them for her own. "Ay, dom your impendance!" exclaimed the landlord, "well this

beats all, howiver ! These your'n ? I'll soon prove that in two minnits to onybody's satisfaction." And with this he was proceeding to open them, when suddenly arresting his own hand, " Stop a bit," he added ; " you say these is your own, do you ? Come, then, I think I've got you now. If they're your own, what is there in 'em,—eh ?"

This unexpected homethrust for the moment confounded the widow, who, taken thus aback, had not wherewithal to furnish an answer before Mr. Pogson continued in the same strain : " Ay, I knowed how it was ; they're just as much your'n as they are the man's in th' mewn. But your'n or not your'n, I'll have 'em, that I'm sartin on ; so here's no use in telling iver sich big lies o'er it." Saying which, he rammed the disputed bundles one into each coat-pocket, and, to Mrs. Thornton's great satisfaction, proceeded towards the door, as though with an intention of departing. With his thumb upon the latch and the door ajar, Mr. P. turned to address the widow in the following parting speech : " Now, afore I go, I'll

tell you what, missis.—You're getting an old woman by th' looks on you, and you ought to know a bit better nor sich as this. Here you've got to your time o' life, and see'd what you mun in all them years, and, after all, just afore you walk into your coffin, you can do noat no better than harbour them young divils, and encourage 'em in their impdance, in spite of them as comes fifteen or twenty mile to comprehend 'em again after running away. You know they ar'n't married nor noat o' th' sort; and I only wish your own doater was sarved same for a judgment on you, blame mae if I don't. That Bess was a vart'us wench when she was in ar house; and if she isn't same in yours, why you may tak' th' consequences on your own dom'd head, and—and—be dom'd to you!" "Samil" here flung the door back, and strode out, followed by his friends Thomas and the constable.

Widow Thornton stood aghast. "Not married!" Those two words only revolved in her mind like a wheel, which ever brings the same thing round. "Not married!" and she stuffed

both her hands into her flannel sides and wondered what to do. But the unfortunate Bessy left her not much time for cogitation: issuing from her retreat immediately on the departure of Mr. Pogson, this simple damsel began very loudly to lament the loss of her bundle, in which was included every article of her wardrobe, with the exception of those on her back. The widow had more important matter on hand, and therefore paid small regard to her complaints; but interrupting them with a reflection, that such little matters could be easily remedied, drew her visage into a serious quadrangular form, and inquired whether it was true that she and the young man were really not married? Bessy assured her it was quite true; but added that she should marry him, God willing, as early as might be next morning. “Ay, dear! ay, dear!” exclaimed Mrs. Thornton very piously; “how can you think of trusting him till then? What things folks will do for want of a bit of experience! You heard how we were ourselves served about my own doater; and yet nobody in this world

could make more certain than she did that he was as fast to her as a church. Oh that scoundrel ! They're all alike, my wench, depend on it. Take my advice, and have nothing to do with him till he's regularly boney-fied married you."

At this moment the young cavalier, whose honour the widow was thus questioning, entered from his citadel in the back premises, he having overheard the departing words of his former host as that worthy quitted the yard with his two assistants; and also, as luck would have it, arrived just in time to catch a few of the final words delivered by Mrs. Thornton as a caution respecting himself. This was of course something more than the widow intended. She stepped back a pace or two at sight of him, and would apparently have regretted nothing could she have scraped off altogether; but Bilberry anticipated her intended movement, and prevented it by observing that he had heard something of what had been just said, and that, if Mrs. Thornton had any observations to make about him or his,

they would be best made to himself; though, at the same time, no landlady of his should interfere at all in what did not concern her.

“ I’ve no wishes to interfere,” exclaimed the widow, “ with anybody’s business but my own ; and all tenants of mine may do as they like, so long as they do right to me and keep themselves quiet. I only was saying to this young woman,—as I understand you are not married,—that I think it is the most common way for young folks to get married before they set up housekeeping, though I’ve no desire in the world to make any unpleasantness about it. Everybody know best where their own shoe pinches; and, for my part, I’ve seen enough, Lord knows ! of them that makes promises and forgets ’em.”

“ So have I, ma’am,” retorted Bilberry : “ you promised, some time ago, to let us have a little supper; but, like all the rest, you seem to have forgotten it again.”

Widow Thornton tried to smother her conscience with a smile; and, willingly seizing this opportunity to escape, took up her candle and

quitted the room. It was not long before our fugitives supped that night: but with the sequel of this adventure the reader shall in proper time be made acquainted.

CHAPTER XVI.

BILBERRY MEETS WITH A STRANGE ADVENTURE IN THE FIELDS. — FALLS IN LOVE WITH MISS CUCUMBER.—HIS EVENING VISIT TO THAT YOUNG LADY, WITH SOME VERY UNEXPECTED CONSEQUENCES.—DISCOVERY OF THE WHOLE PLOT.—ON HIS RETURN, FINDS THAT BESSY HAD DESERTED HIM AND FLED.

IN the borough of Wenborough, and beneath the roof of Mrs. Thornton, Bilberry and Bessy remained the space of ten months. How in the early part of that time they contrived to scratch on for a livelihood has not for certain been ascertained; though this is hardly to be wondered at, when the reader is informed that even Bilberry himself, privy though he was to his own actions, scarcely knew, amidst the jumble of little businesses in which he was engaged, exactly in what manner he got his

parings of money, or how the subsistence of himself and his lady was eked out of them. From what little is known, there are reasons to suspect that, about four months after his settlement in Cinder-alley, and when the small balance of his wage-account with farmer Blunt, as well as the earnings of Bessy at Mr. Pogson's, must have been completely expended, he and Mrs. Thurland junior were reduced to some extremities. After that period, it remains on record, that to keep, not body and soul, as the saying is, but their two bodies³ together, Bessy took in a small mite of washing from two single men in the yard; and Bilberry, very ignominiously, drove about the town a jackass laden with sand, dug on a neighbouring heath, for the floors of the housewives of Wenborough. By these occupations neither of them were in the way of making a fortune, since the profit on sand, considering the wear and tear of jackasses and panniers, was very inconsiderable; while the morsel of washing which Bessy obtained afforded so little, in consequence of the two single men who

employed her living together in the same garret, and wearing only one shirt per week between them, that, though occasionally swelled in its amount by an extra petticoat from the charitable hand of her landlady, widow Thornton, it is almost doubtful whether the cost of brown soap, pearlash, and skin of knuckles was not greater than the income derived from their employment. But, however this might be, certain it is that, with the aid of an occasional shilling or two which, Heaven and himself best know how, Bilberry contrived to pick up in a lump during the course of his peregrinations, this striving couple did succeed in preserving the breath in their bodies a little longer. One fortunate circumstance in their affairs during this period of trial however was, that Bilberry's jackass cost him nothing in victuals; it being the constant practice of that young hero either to lead his beast forth of an evening into the green lanes about Wemborough, and hold his halter while he nibbled his supper for himself from the thistly banks and hedge-bottoms; or else to carry out an

old sand-bag under his arm, and with one of widow Thornton's carving-knives, to visit the fields and wastes for the purpose of mowing down some roods of grass and nettles, which he afterwards carried home to the expectant donkey in Cinder-alley.

As for himself and Elizabeth, it is most satisfactory to record, that throughout this period of privation, which altogether lasted some four or five months, they conducted themselves with a philosophic fortitude unknown to many greater heroes, and bore the buffetings of Fortune with as much indifference as doth some sturdy thrasher the flap of an old bag.

How long they might have stood up against poverty thus valiantly, Fate did not appear inclined to try; but having now, as it seemed, sufficiently tested their capabilities of endurance, she kindly turned the table round, and set a dish of better luck before them. For this Bilberry was very thankful; and if the reader have a mind to taste it along with him, he need only sit down to the next paragraph, and press forward to the end of the chapter.

As Bilberry, according to custom, was one evening on the peaceful duty of victualling his ass in a retired by-road west of the town, and also at the time cutting himself a blackthorn walking-stick and musing on his fate, it so fell out that his reveries were on a sudden disturbed by the cries of some female voice in an adjoining field, which, from its tone, appeared to certify that the individual who uttered it was in deep distress and danger. Now we have before had occasion to remark, that Bilberry was possessed of the manly and becoming spirit of gallantry in a degree most eminent and peculiar to himself.

So, quitting his donkey, and raising that stick which he had so fortunately just cut, on to his shoulder, he crept swiftly but silently along the hedge-side until he came nigh the place from whence the voice proceeded. Then thrusting his head and shoulders through the bushes, he beheld, as it were, close to his elbow, a ruffian of a ferocious aspect, but, in comparison with Bilberry's, of rather contemptible dimensions, ransacking the pockets of a young lady whom

he had thrown on the ground and knelt upon, for the better effecting of his purpose. The scoundrel had also stuffed into her mouth, to stop her cries, a piece of dirty rag called a handkerchief, of his own, and which, when subsequently pulled out, was found not a whit preferable to a dishcloth. In short, it was anything but the morsel which a young lady would have desired to taste. No sooner did Bilberry behold this sight than he dashed impetuously through the hedge, and, with a blow of his knotted half-trimmed stick, endeavoured to fell the offender to the earth. The latter, however, not wishing to second Bilberry's object, leapt out of the way, and, picking up a stone about the size of a potato, hurled it with terrible fury at that young hero's chest ; and without waiting to know the result of his missile, immediately made off. The reader, we presume, if a Christian, is more anxious after the welfare of Mr. Thurland ; and therefore we are happy to inform him that, at the moment when the stone was thrown, this young man happened, by what some people would pronounce an immediate in-

terference of Providence, to have his legs stretched so wide apart, that the destructive missile passed through them without injury. Bilberry now turned to the young lady, whom he raised from the ground, and delivered of that filthy mouthful before mentioned. Scarcely able to walk through fright and ill-usage, Bilberry took her in his arms ; and having ascertained that she lived at a place called Vinegar-walk, in the town of Wenborough, he carried her to the spot where he had left his ass at supper, and, placing her on his back, drove towards home. On the way he learned that the lady's name was Jemima Cucumber, and that, having been visiting at a friend's in the country, she was on her return home, when the ruffian from whose hands Bilberry had rescued her jumped out of an old cart-shed and knocked her down. Her loss of property, however, was small ; the timely arrival of her deliverer having saved every thing with the exception of a new presentation pincushion, two-pence halfpenny in specie, and a few other odd female trifles of no account.

This adventure produced in its consequences something rather remarkable ; and different, we believe, to whatever either Bilberry or the reader might have anticipated. For the former we can speak to a certainty, that he was more heartily deceived in this affair than in any other in which, either before or afterwards, it was his fortune to be engaged.

On their way home, Miss Cucumber was not so far overcome but she could find tongue to inform Bilberry of the wide and magnificent circle of her friends, the extreme respectability of her family and connexions, and the great gratitude which her father and mother would be sure to evince towards him for the assistance he had rendered herself when in so dangerous a situation ; concluding her harangue by the positive assurance that her father would either make him a handsome present at once, or, if he should prefer this method best, promote him to some excellent situation in Wenborough, where, considered comparatively with his present occupation, he would soon be in the way of making a fortune.

All this our young hero thought amazingly fine. There was but one drawback to it; the young lady appeared to consider him as a single bachelor, and, as he somewhat presumptuously believed, had already conceived the first bud of a sprouting affection for him. The image of Bessy came up to forbid any reciprocal attachment, and to blight his prospects. For the first time since his elopement, he now began to regard that foolish damsel as one who, so far from being any good to him, would only be for ever an impediment in his way, and a stumbling-block between him and his good fortune. He regretted having brought her from Mr. Pogson's; but as that act could not now be undone, at least he wished himself well rid of her. He was even endeavouring to devise the best means of shaking poor Bessy off, when his ruminations were suddenly cut short by the voice of her who had put all these dreams into his head, breaking in upon him to request that she might descend from the back of his ass, and walk. They were nigh the town, and she would not be seen riding

on so contemptible an animal. She allowed Bilberry to lift her down ; and in the descent, be it known, he was obliged to clasp her so closely that his love for her was thereby considerably heightened, and his attachment to the unfortunate Bessy necessarily in a proportionate degree diminished.

At that moment he almost resolved not to return to widow Thornton's any more at all ; but instead, to devote himself to the respectable creature before him, and so to follow up that good fortune which with the vulgar Bessy he could never hope to realise. So thinking, he stuffed Miss Cucumber's arm beneath his own ; and, pulling his ass behind him, pleased himself with the notion that he was hugging along a respectable wife that should be, and good luck also, altogether in one blessed lump. This time, however, as will be seen,—and very justly too, — Bilberry was outwitted ; for although that treacherous young man might, within himself, lack not the power of justification, we, who have been bred in better morals and with a

more correct idea of the obligations of lovers, shall be most rejoiced to find him well punished for his perfidy to Bessy.

Those two classical places, Cinder-alley and Vinegar-walk, were not the distance of eight hundred yards from one another; hence there is some probability that, by one chance or other, either Bilberry might have seen Miss Cucumber, or she have remarked him, previous to the present time. Of this we shall know more shortly: but at present the reader ought to be informed, that on the arrival of our couple in town, Miss Cucumber requested her preserver to call upon her about nine o'clock the same evening, when she would introduce him to her friends; giving her address in Vinegar-walk as the second door round the first corner on the left-hand side of the right-hand court. Here-upon Bilberry leapt across his ass, and trotted home rejoicing; whistling as he went the tune of "As I walked out one morning fair," and beating time with his stick on the shoulders of his donkey.

At the appointed hour Bilberry repaired to

Vinegar-walk, but being rather an indifferent mathematician, it was some time before he could make out Miss Cucumber's residence; the direction she had given for it being, as he now found, something like a problem in Euclid. At length he got into a corner like the one described, and knocked with his accustomed assurance. The house was large and respectable in appearance; nor was it long before the door opened, and he was ushered up stairs on to the first floor, and into the presence of Miss Cucumber. That injured female he found reclining on three chairs, with a small portion of her ankles just visible below her gown. She started up in great confusion on being surprised by him in so negligent an attitude, and straightening her robes very particularly, requested him to take a seat beside her. With this invitation Bilberry immediately complied; and in the course of half an hour found himself engaged in one of the sweetest conversations imaginable with the prettiest creature in all Wenborough.

The reader may perhaps imagine it somewhat extraordinary that Jemima Cucumber should

have received her visitor alone,—so likewise thought Bilberry himself; but for this, as for many other obscure things, there was in fact a most excellent good reason, although, as yet, we are not perfectly acquainted with it. Towards ten o'clock, Miss C. rang her bell, and ordered so magnificent a supper to be prepared for two persons that Bilberry became suddenly quite alarmed. It would cost as much, according to his calculation, as a whole week's feed for Bessy and himself put together; yet was it commanded to be got ready with the same indifference that a poor woman might command the preparation of a glass of water. The fish was to be fried brown, the steak not overdone, and the best apple-tart warmed in the oven again; because in the consultation between Miss Cucumber and her visitor on this important point, the latter had expressed his palate as best pleased with warm tart rather than cold. The whole was to be sent up within half an hour.

That time Bilberry spent in farther conversation, and in pleasing anticipations of the coming of that famous meal which was ordered

for his entertainment. The half-hour expired ; Miss Cucumber inquired of her visitor how his appetite stood, to which our hero replied that it was as keen as a carving-knife ; whereupon she again violently rang the bell, and severely scolded the servant for not having everything in readiness at the stated moment. After which she complained to Bilberry of the extreme negligence of servants, and the great difficulty she experienced in getting her orders executed.

Time still passed on, and the magnificent supper did not come. Bilberry could not even so much as hear the splutter of the frying-pan, or smell the broiling steak. Everybody below was silent. As for Miss Cucumber, eventually she let the subject drop silently into its grave, as though her memory of it had of a sudden altogether failed. Neither tongue nor bell spoke of it again, and Bilberry was reduced to fill his stomach with the wind of defunct hopes and disappointment. He would have sunk into a quagmire of strange reflections upon this extraordinary proceeding, had not Miss Cucumber

still talked with the same freedom as before, and not only made herself extremely familiar with him, but also at last fetched out a small bottle of gin and a cruet of water from a kind of cupboard in the room, which, as Bilberry glanced in while Jemima had the door open, he found to contain a bed on the bottom, and a pantry on the shelves above.

Of this liquor she pressed him to take a glass along with herself, in a manner so kind and bewitching, that his heart irresistibly complied with her wishes ; and, in five minutes after, he drank to her excellent good health, and, in his mind, confusion and clear riddance to the unhappy Bessy, whom he had left at widow Thornton's. Soon his head began to swim ; he felt conscious that the liquor was not good, but a thousand visions of bliss flitted before his mind, which previously he had not at all conceived. Miss Cucumber smiled more sweetly at him over the table ; he felt that this happiness must be increased or prolonged, and he drank another and another glass. The voice of Jemima was now close to his ear, he felt

her hand upon his cheek; but his head was heavy and confused, and he could not speak to her as he would. He wished to ask her for her father, her friends, all those of whom she had spoken in the fields; but his tongue was fast, and it muttered inarticulately in his mouth. In place of those happy dreams which before had filled his mind, dreadful fears and visionary horrors now thronged his brain. He strove to arouse himself, and get away from this place; he wished he was back in his own quiet lodging; and then, as a last effort, strove to get upon his legs: his head reeled, and he sank back into the chair. The violent slamming to of the door, together with his painful anxiety to retain his senses, if possible, now aroused him a little more. He became conscious that another was in the room: he rolled his head round upon his breast, and heavily raising his eyes in that direction, beheld the very same man from whose hands he had that evening apparently delivered Miss Cucumber, now in the dress of a gentleman, pressing her in a drunken embrace to his bosom. The plot and the trea-

chery came upon his mind in a moment ; he shrieked more than spoke, and in a wild and desperate effort to escape, staggered along the floor a few paces, and then fell at the foot of the table insensible.

When Bilberry came to himself again, it was in the midst of darkness : his clothes were stripped off, and he lay on a small hard pallet, in a room scarcely big enough to hold the mattress ; his feet touched the bottom wall, his head the top, and his elbows that on each side : endeavouring to rise, he ran his head against a shelf. This brought Miss Cucumber's cupboard to his recollection, and pretty certainly assured him of the situation he occupied. The door was locked ; but little trouble was required to shoot the bolt, and Bilberry strode out. It was broad daylight in the room, and, as he judged from the direction of the sunbeams, rather late in the day. His clothes were nowhere to be found ; Miss Cucumber and her accomplice having carried them off, together with six shillings and three half-pence in the watch-pocket of his trousers. A broken glass, the tip of an old

straw bonnet, and that identical rag which he had taken out of Jemima's mouth, lay on the table. Bilberry knew not what to do. The house appeared quite deserted. He rang the bell as loud as a parish sexton, but nobody came. Then he peeped out of the window, but saw no one to whom he might call for assistance.

In despair, at length he returned to the cupboard, drew on the pillow-case instead of trousers, and wrapped the blanket tightly round him by way of coat, in hope of thus making a respectable passage from Vinegar-walk to Cinder-alley. Down stairs all was darkness and dirt : it seemed like a house to let, for all the inmates of last night had fled. By descending into the kitchen, Bilberry effected his exit out of the back-window, through the area, and so escaped ; taking a back way, through courts and yards, to his own mansion in Cinder-alley. He had now learned a good lesson on the value of that faithful Bessy whom but the evening before he had despised, regarded as a drawback and a burden, and, for the sake of so

scandalous and deceitful a creature as Miss Jemima Cucumber, wished himself free from altogether. Yet how should he dare to show his face before her? What could he say? What apology be able to make?

Vexed and ashamed, he pulled his blanket around him, and hurried home to do his best.

Widow Thornton looked astonished when Bilberry presented himself at her door. From some circumstances that had transpired in the mean time at her house, that landlady had not expected to see him any more at all, much less in so ridiculous a plight as the present. He stepped into his own room, and looking round half ashamed, asked timidly for Bessy. The widow became as solemn and leaden as a slate gravestone at the mention of that name, and in few but most cutting words informed Bilberry that the damsel had forsaken him and gone away. It was too true. Some friendly neighbour had seen Bilberry the previous night on his visit to Miss Cucumber's, and immediately conveyed the news back to Bessy, that her husband had entered a house of indifferent credit,

regardless altogether of the duty and feeling that he owed to herself. This intelligence so fired the jealousy of Bessy's heart, that she vowed to quit him immediately, and retire to some place unknown to him; a threat which she carried into instant execution, taking with her everything belonging to them at all portable, and leaving behind her, as a memento for her faithless cavalier, nothing but the whole shot of their lodgings with Mrs. Thornton for discharge, and a small living article, commonly called "a pledge of affection," about two months old. This young Bilberry, the reader will be pleased to remark, is the very "sequel" to that broken adventure at the end of the last chapter, with which we there promised, at a proper time, to make him acquainted.

On hearing this news, Bilberry became extremely agitated; and, for the first time since his appearance before Squire Barton some years earlier, turned pale as a Yorkshire pudding. Not knowing at present what else to do, he requested widow Thornton to leave the room; and then slipping on an old suit of clothes that

he happened to have by him, sat down at the table, with his head between both his hands, to ruminate on his folly and its just punishment, — this double disappointment.

Possibly it may be thought that the promise of relating better luck at the end of this chapter, is not redeemed in a manner that might have been expected: but let no one complain before he is perfectly certain of being in the right, lest, during the course of the next half-dozen pages, he find occasion to regret it.

CHAPTER XVII.

BILBERRY CORRESPONDS WITH A CERTAIN MAID.—GOES OUT TO SERVICE.—DESCRIPTION OF THE SINGULAR PERSON AND HABITS OF HIS MASTER.—MISS BILBERRY THURLAND IS FETCHED AWAY BY HER MOTHER.

WHAT has been already related, may appear to ignorant people rather disastrous than fortunate; but when we consider to what results it led, we must at once admit that evil may be good, and misfortunes the best luck in the world.

Deceived in Miss Cucumber, and deserted of Bessy, Bilberry felt himself, though a lone, yet a free man again. Unencumbered, he might take to anything that fell out: as for his old employment of fetching sand from the common,

he had grown tired of it, because it afforded no prospect worth his looking at of advancement and reputation.

At once he resolved to seek out for other work ; and having in vain inquired of his landlady, the widow, for employment, he was driven to the necessity of applying to a certain servant-maid, with whom he had formed an intimacy through the medium of the sand which he had carried to her kitchen.

This maid, Susan Dishcloth by name, resided in the family of a strange knight of Wenborough, one Sir Robert Ernest Gruel, a superannuated gentleman, who having, some years before, lost his wife, now resided with his daughter in a splendid mansion in the centre of Swipes Crescent.

About dusk-hour the same evening, Bilberry repaired to the house, and, dropping down the steps of the area very silently, poked unseen through the nick of the window, on to the dresser, where his acquaintance happened to be engaged in ironing, a note, of which this is a copy.

“DEAR DISHCLOTH,

“I have given up the profession which first introduced me to you, and am at this time in want of a good place. If the services I have rendered you in the way of sand will give me a demand on your gratitude, you will much oblige me by informing if you are aware of any situation to suit ; as I consider myself fit, when brushed up, to enter a gentleman’s family, and shall do no disgrace to no kitchen. So I remain, yours truly, BILBERRY THURLAND.”

The next night, as our hero sat in his room pondering on the melancholy state of his affairs, widow Thornton knocked at his door, and presented him with a letter that had just been brought by a little boy. It was sealed with the top of a thimble, and directed, “Blibbery Twirlan, Cinder-hole Yard.” He opened, and read as follows.

“Swipes Cresnt Kitchin, Wensday.

“DEAR BILBRY,

“This leavs me well as it finds yo, I hop. Yours comed in a nick of time, for Sir Robet

Gruel has in want of a nice young man for all work and generlly useful, as I think you ar ; and so cum down as soon as yo read this, for I shal injoy your cumpny in my kitchen verry much. It is new washed on porpoise. If Sir Robet wil take yew, as I nos he wil, we tew mite think of puttin hour mites in one, an if you wod hav me, we wod mary out here after a wile. At this present I hav a small fortin, and can larn yo how to save in this ouse, so as then we mite put ar fortins together, an mak a stir in the wold like them as is better.

“ Yours til deth,

“ SUSHANDLE DISHCLOTH.”

On the receipt of this, Bilberry's heart rejoiced within him ; he sprang on to his feet, washed his hands and face, and borrowing from his landlady, for this particular occasion, an old hat that once belonged to Mr. Thornton, set off to Sir Robert Gruel's. Miss Dishcloth received him with open arms ; and having first fed him on the remains of a shoulder of mutton, went up stairs to inform her master that a

young man had applied about the situation, and was waiting in the kitchen. In about five minutes she returned, and ushered Bilberry up stairs into a sitting-room, the like of which his eyes had never before beheld: not that it was out of the common order, but only because he had not hitherto been introduced to anything so genteel. Yet did he not look round with any peculiar curiosity, lest it might go against him: instead, he turned his eyes bashfully at Sir Robert, who lay with his legs on a sofa, and at Miss Lucinda Victoria Gruel, his daughter, who sat beside him drawing what was intended to be a landscape, though in reality it was so strange a mixture of the four elements and the objects contained therein, that no one save herself, and the drawing-master who had initiated her into the mystery, could possibly have interpreted such an hieroglyphic.

Bilberry stood a full quarter of an hour, first on one leg and then on the other, before either miss or her father condescended to take any notice of him. At length, without raising

either his head or his eyes, Sir Robert asked of his daughter :

“What is that boy waiting there for?”

“Oh, pa!” exclaimed Miss Lucinda, “you sent for him up a few minutes ago. He has applied, I suppose, for John’s place.”

“Umph!” grunted Sir R. “I’ve nothing to do with him. You know what I want. Let him know how to behave himself. I’ll discharge him in a moment, miss!” cried the old man in a raised, but childish voice, “if he dare to laugh at *me*.” Then falling again into a weak, pantaloon-like accent of complaint, he observed, “I did not think to turn John away at last for laughing at me.”

This opened Bilberry’s eyes. He saw that Sir Robert was a whimsical fellow, grown completely childish, yet impatient and sensitive of any imagined indignity to himself. He had, it seemed, discharged his former man, whose place Bilberry now wished to fill, for laughing at some of his oddities. This at least was a good warning to our hero how to conduct himself in case he obtained the place ; so that privately he resolved

never to laugh at anything within those walls. Lucinda Victoria now questioned him as to his knowledge and abilities,—Bilberry's answers to which appeared to give her satisfaction; although, from the pleasant eye with which she scrutinized him, it appeared somewhat probable that his good looks rather than his experience entitled him to her favour. She concluded by telling him he might take up his residence in the house on the morrow evening.

The following day, then, he employed in settling with widow Thornton, and arranging his affairs. First, he sold his ass, and with part of the money paid all rents and charges; the rest, excepting only a very small mite which he kept in his pocket to breed more, he consigned to widow Thornton's daughter, in part consideration for the kind office which she undertook of rearing up that young female Bilberry before spoken of, whom her mother had so unkindly abandoned. He farther stipulated with young nurse Thornton to pay her two shillings per week for Miss Bilberry as long as she remained under her care.

These arrangements completed, Mr. Thurland early went down to his new settlement, where, provided with a kind of half-bred livery, and taking his meals daily with Susan Dishcloth, he soon found himself most comfortably at home. His employments were chiefly of a domestic kind, such as cleaning shoes, clogs, and knives; running of errands, brushing his master's coat, and carrying certain love-notes, as he believed, from Miss Lucinda to Captain George Flunks, and from the captain back again to Miss Gruel.

Meantime we must not omit to state that his master, Sir Robert, had taken a great fancy to him, and frequently had him about his person, to assist on occasions of necessity in ministering to his amusement; a favour with which Lucinda was in no degree inclined to find fault, considering that she herself esteemed him as a modest virgin bachelor, and found him, in her communications with the captain, so trustworthy a courier.

We have before observed that the old knight had outgrown half his faculties, and, though

possessed of a certain degree of bodily activity whenever he chose to exercise it, he was at times troubled with fits of blue devils, during which he fancied his frame as flimsy as a spider-web, and scared himself out of his wits by conjuring up a variety of strange bugbears entirely from the resources of his own imagination. On these occasions the rattling of a dinner-plate would cause him to stuff both his fore-fingers into his ears, the sight of a stranger put him into a shiver, and the blast from an open door would blow him out of his chair. Hence it was, that by knocking no crockery together, denying him to all visitors, and leaving no doors open, Bilberry obtained so large a share of his master's favour. His recovery from these conceits was usually preceded by a very evident change in his mind. He would draw himself a large share of consolation from the very same imaginations, on the strength of which, a few days before, he had conceived everything dreadful. Then he would begin to question the cause of his falling into so nervous a condition, doubt the efficacy of medicine for disorders of that

kind, and in the end attribute it all to the want of sufficient bodily exercise.

When properly strengthened in this latter opinion, he would endeavour to remedy the defect by employing himself in whipping a boy's top about the floor, playing with his man Bilberry at marbles, trundling a hoop round his garden, or flying a kite.

When the weather, however, was wet, or Sir Robert's taste had changed, he would practise other sports, and try to regulate his digestion, and assist the native powers of the stomach, by exercising himself on a swing. It was then Bilberry's duty to adjust his cushion, and pull him backwards and forwards with a becoming gravity.

These freaks, as the reader will very shortly find, ended at length in a disaster about as ludicrous as could well be imagined.

We shall close this chapter, and the volume, with a stray piece of information introduced here for two especial reasons. One is, that it would not fit in, or amalgamate with, any other part of our book; and the other, because we

wish all mothers and grandmothers who peruse this history to close their eyes with satisfaction. Such, then, will rejoice to find, that in having charged Bessy Thurland junior with a strange want of maternal tenderness in leaving her child behind her when she fled from Bilberry, they have made a trifling mistake. On the very first Saturday night when that hero went down to pay nurse Thornton for her trouble, he found that Bessy had returned the preceding day and redeemed her "pledge," by discharging costs and carrying it away. How she raised the money, whither she went, or by what means she gained her living, widow Thornton knew not. Bilberry both regretted and rejoiced at this event: for it brought, first a sudden tear of sensibility into his eye when the thought crossed him what woman—when a mother—will but do; and then a comfortable smile across his teeth to find himself so unexpectedly relieved of a charge which, to a young man in his situation, could not be other than a monstrous inconvenience. Lest, however, any one should form too ill an opinion of his heart, it must be added,

that at the earliest convenience afterwards, he again called on widow Thornton, and deposited two guineas and a quarter in the hands of that treasurer for the use of Bessy, in case she should at any time call there again.

END OF THE SECOND VOLUME.

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